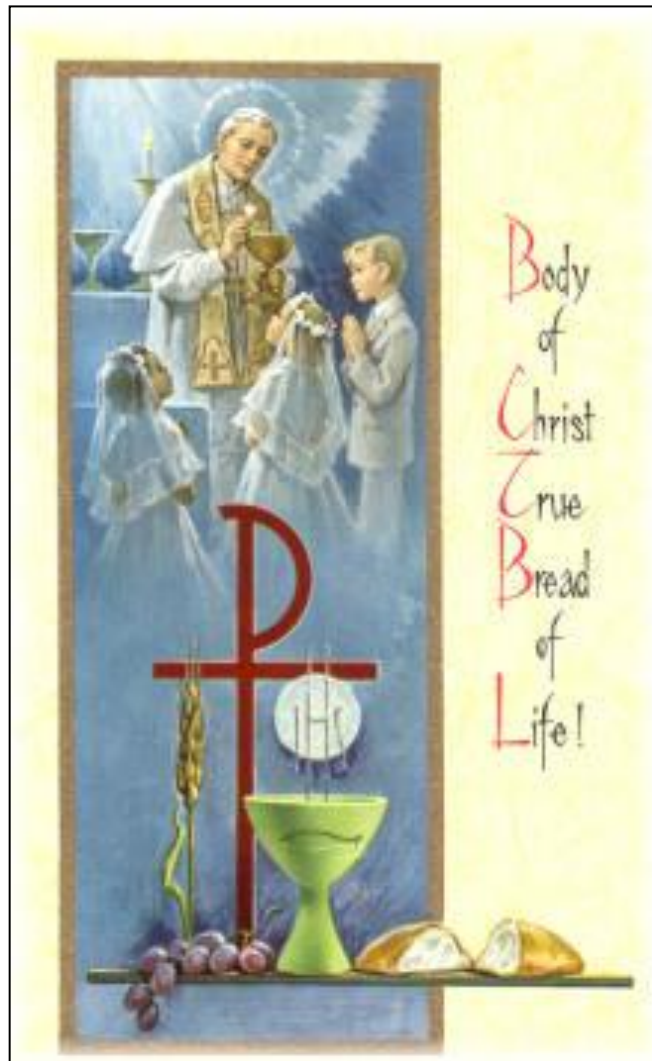


Sacrament of First Communion



Parent Handbook
2020-2021

Important Information

Parent Meeting

Tuesday	September 29	Parent Meeting	7 pm – 8 pm	St. John Bosco Room
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First Eucharist

▪ Saturday,	May 1	Retreat (w/ parent)	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	Parish Hall
		Confession	12:30 pm	Church
▪ Sunday,	May 2	First Eucharist	10:00 AM	Church
		Reception	11:00 AM	Parish Hall

At the ***Retreat on Saturday, May 1, 2021***, the children will learn more about the Eucharist through various activities. They will also practice proper behavior during the Mass and how to receive the Eucharist. ***Child and parent will complete each activity together.*** Lunch will not be provided. Parents will have the opportunity to ask questions as well. It ends at 12:00 pm, the children will have time to examine their conscience, and then go to Confession. It is recommended for the children to go to Confession before they receive the Eucharist for the first time. Parents are welcome to go to Confession as well.

At **Mass on Sunday, May 2, 2021 at 10:00 AM**, the children receive their First Holy Communion. Please arrive in the Church **30 minutes early** for individual photos of your child before Mass starts. We will take a group photo in front of the altar shortly before the Mass begins. Your child will receive a blessed Scapular during Mass. At the end of the Mass, please come over to the Parish Hall to retrieve your child's First Communion Certificate and join us for a reception.

Please make sure that your child is dressed appropriately for this occasion. This is not strictly required, of course, but traditionally boys wear a dark-blue or black suit with a tie and girls wear a white dress. Veils for the girls can be purchased at St. Maximilian Kolbe bookstore on 18th Street.

Finally, please read the remaining pages in this handbook as it contains the teachings from the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

I pray you be filled with joy.

Norm Hayden, Director of Religious Education
270-683-8444, ext 26
bmcreled@bellsouth.net

The Eucharist

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." ~ John 6:53-56

IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, chapter six contains one of the most explicit teachings on the Eucharist made by Jesus. The chapter begins with a miracle of the multiplication of

the loaves, a prefigurement of the Eucharist (see Jn 6:1-14). Immediately following the miracle, because of their lack of understanding, the people intend to make Jesus king. For this reason, Jesus withdraws to the hills (see Jn 6:15). Noticing that he has gone away, the people begin seeking Jesus in Capernaum (see Jn 6:24). When they find him, Jesus teaches them the meaning of the miracle.

He says, "[T]he will of my Father [is] that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life" (Jn 6:40), because he is the "true bread from Heaven" (Jn 6:32) which "gives life to the world" (Jn 6:33). Not only must they believe in him, but also they must eat and drink his Flesh and Blood:

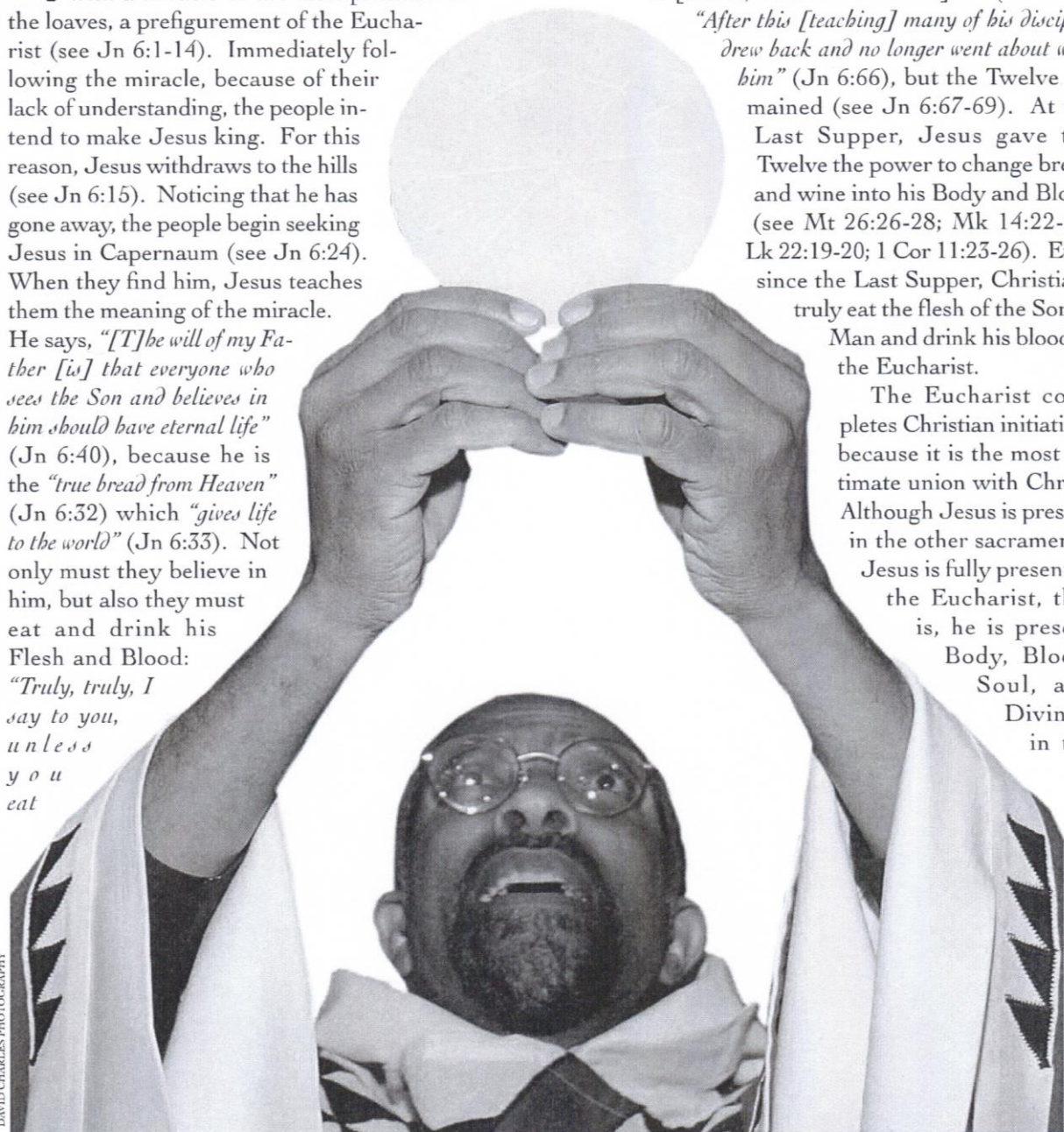
"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat

the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (see beginning verses). Those who heard the teaching said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to [that is, believe and follow] it?" (Jn 6:60).

"After this [teaching] many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him" (Jn 6:66), but the Twelve remained (see Jn 6:67-69). At the Last Supper, Jesus gave the Twelve the power to change bread and wine into his Body and Blood (see Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-23; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26). Ever since the Last Supper, Christians truly eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist completes Christian initiation, because it is the most intimate union with Christ. Although Jesus is present in the other sacraments, Jesus is fully present in the Eucharist, that is, he is present Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the

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Eucharistic species (the consecrated bread and wine). For this reason, the Eucharist is called the Real Presence. Also, for this reason, the Eucharist is the source and summit of all Christian life, a participation in the life in Heaven given to those who believe in him while he is still on earth. In other words, every aspect of the Christian faith leads toward and flows from this sacrament, which is nothing other than Jesus himself. In his love, God also gave to us the Third Commandment, "Remember to keep holy the sabbath day." This commandment, which in Pope John Paul II's words is "a defining and indelible expression of our relationship with God" (*On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy* 13), is transferred in the New Covenant from the sabbath (the seventh day, or Saturday), to the Lord's Day (Sunday) because Sunday was the day when Jesus rose from the dead. We therefore recall God's saving works by honoring the "new day of creation," the weekly Easter. Participation in Sunday Mass is obligatory — a participation which is necessary for the People of God to live as God created them and to praise him rightly as he deserves to be praised. Furthermore, through the Holy Spirit, this required Sunday participation has also become the first precept of the Church, "You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor"¹ (CCC 2042) (see handout on The Sabbath and Sunday Worship).

Names for the Eucharist

The sacrament of the Eucharist is known by several different names, each revealing some aspect

of the sacrament. The name "Eucharist" is drawn from the Greek word *eucharistein*, meaning "to give thanks." This word is found in two of the Last Supper accounts, the Gospel of Luke and St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, a related Greek word *eulogein*, meaning "to bless or praise," is used. Since the Eucharist is celebrated as a community, the celebration is sometimes referred to as the "Eucharistic Assembly."

The name "Lord's Supper" references both the Last Supper and the Heavenly Banquet. During the Last Supper, Jesus first instituted both Holy Orders and the Holy Eucharist when he took, broke, and blessed the bread and wine and instructed the apostles to do this in memory of him (see Lk 22:19-20). The Heavenly Banquet anticipates "*the marriage supper of the Lamb*" (Rv 19:9), when the entire family of God will all be present in glory.

The name "Breaking of the Bread" points to the fact that the Eucharist is prefigured by the Jewish Passover meal that also had a "Breaking of the Bread." When Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus, it was not until he broke the bread that "*their eyes were opened and they recognized him*" (Lk

24:31). This name was also used by the first Christians (see Acts 2:46; Acts 20:7, 11).

The names "Holy and Divine Liturgy" or "Most Blessed Sacrament" state the truth that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. It is the sacrament to which all other sacraments lead, because Jesus is really present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.



*"Christians truly eat
the flesh of the Son of Man
and drink his blood
in the Eucharist."*

¹ Cf. Codex Iuris Canonici, cann. 1246-1248; Corpus Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium, can. 880 § 3, 881 §§ 1,2,4

The name "Sacrifice of the Mass" emphasizes that in the Eucharistic celebration, Jesus' sacrifice of his Body made "once for all" (Heb 10:10) time and all people is truly present. In other

words, when we participate in the Eucharist, we join Jesus at the cross. Scripture also uses the names "sacrifice of thanksgiving" (Ps 50:14; Ps 116:17), "spiritual sacrifice" (1 Pt 2:5).

The name "Holy Communion" tells the reality that in the Eucharist, we unite ourselves with Christ and his Body (the Church) whose members are in Heaven, Purgatory, and on earth.

Last, the most common name "Holy Mass" or "Mass" comes from the ancient Latin closing words of the priest: *Itz, missa est* ("go, you are sent"). We hear in English, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord," and these words send the faithful into the world to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ and to take the charity which comes from our communion with Christ to the world (see Mt 28:18-20).

The Eucharistic Celebration

The celebration of the Eucharist was made possible by Jesus himself when he instituted Holy Orders and Holy Communion at the Last Supper. Particularly, through the institution of Holy Orders, every priest acts *in persona Christi* ("in the person of Christ"; see handout on *In Persona Christi*), and so Jesus and his Paschal mystery are made present every time Mass is celebrated.

The Mass has two parts. The first part consists in the reading and preaching of the Word of God and the second in the celebrating of the Eucharist. After the preaching, the faithful

"Calling down the Holy Spirit . . . transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ by means of the same words spoken at the Last Supper."

are invited to present their needs to God in prayer. Next, the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the Presentation of the Gifts. The gifts are bread and wine because they are ancient

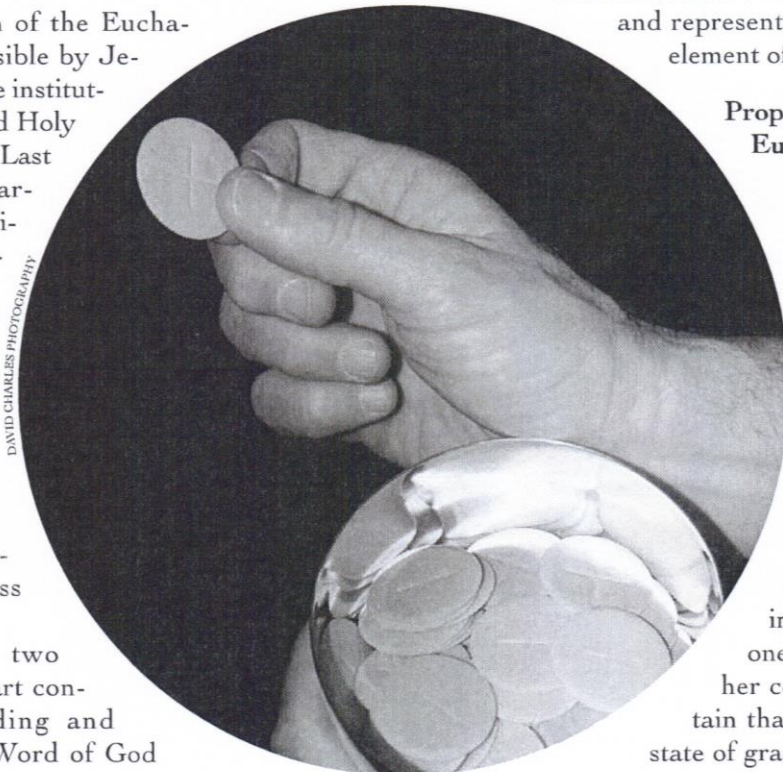
symbols of God's creation which call to mind many Old Testament images, among which is the offering of the priest-king Melchizedek (see Gn 14:18-20). They are brought forward, sometimes in procession by the faithful as a sign of thanksgiving to God for the goodness manifested to them in the abundance of his creation. After receiving these gifts, the priest begins the Eucharistic Prayer by offering these gifts in the name of all those gathered and the whole Church to God the Father. Then, by calling down the Holy Spirit, he transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ by means of the same words spoken at the Last Supper: "Take this all of you and eat it; this is my body given up for you. Take this cup and drink from it; this is my blood shed for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins; do this in memory of me." These words are

referred to as the words of consecration and represent the most important element of the Mass.

Proper Reception of the Eucharist

"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor 11:27), which is known as a sin of sacrilege. In order to receive Jesus in the Eucharist in a "worthy manner,"

one must examine his or her conscience to be certain that he or she is in the state of grace, that is, free from all deadly sin. Those who are aware of deadly sin in their own lives must first re-



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ceive absolution in the sacrament of Reconciliation. For those who come to Mass with venial (lesser) sins, a proper disposition of contrition and the faithful praying of the Introductory prayers (penitential) are all that is required to be properly prepared. One also prepares to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus by observing the one-hour fast before Communion, spending time in prayer immediately before Holy Communion, and through a daily life of prayer and Christian witness. Thus freed from all sin and strengthened by prayer, the faithful may receive the Eucharist. They are obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, but they can receive whenever they participate in the Mass. The Body and Blood of Jesus may be received either on the hand (making a "throne" for the Lord) or the tongue. Some prior act of reverence — genuflecting, bowing, or making the Sign of the Cross — must also be done, keeping in mind the appropriate etiquette (not "lording it over others" or prolonging the Communion line disruptively). In the United States, a simple bow of the head prior to receiving the host and the chalice is recommended as the norm for all the faithful (see Phil 2:10). Most importantly, these signs of reverence should reflect an interior disposition of gratitude and adoration for Jesus who has humbled himself to become bread for us to eat.

This coming up to Holy Communion and the subsequent "Amen" is the "altar call" for the believing Catholic. In this "altar call," it is Jesus himself (acting in the person of the priest) who gives his very Body and Blood to be taken inside each one who receives him following their affirmation of faith: Amen ("I believe").



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"The consecrated bread and wine are our spiritual food."

Grace of the Eucharist

The principal effect of the Eucharist is an intimate union with Christ. Jesus says, *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him"* (Jn 6:56). By receiving Holy Communion, the Christian is physically joined to Jesus — a union in which the believer becomes ever more like him. Thus this union preserves, increases, and renews the grace received in Baptism. The consecrated bread and wine are our spiritual food.

Christians cannot be intimately united with Christ, who was without sin, without themselves being for-

given of all sin. This release from sin enkindles in us charity and a greater love for God, strengthening our spiritual life so that we practice virtues and give Christian witness. In turn, we become even more like Christ and find it more difficult to sin in the future. This cycle of spiritual growth is continuously repeated as the image of Christ is made more visible in the heart of every Christian who properly receives Jesus in this sacrament.

"Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17), that is, when we receive Holy Communion, we are not only intimately united with Christ, but also with his Body, the Church, the family of God. In other words, in the Eucharist, we are more intimately united to each other. Furthermore, since we are all united with Christ, we share in his mission together. In Christ, we are to go out to all the nations and teach them all that Jesus commanded (Mt 28:18-20) so that they might also be united to the family of God in Baptism and eventually feast at the heavenly marriage supper of Christ and his Church.

(CCC 1322-1405, 1533, 2042, 2835-2837)

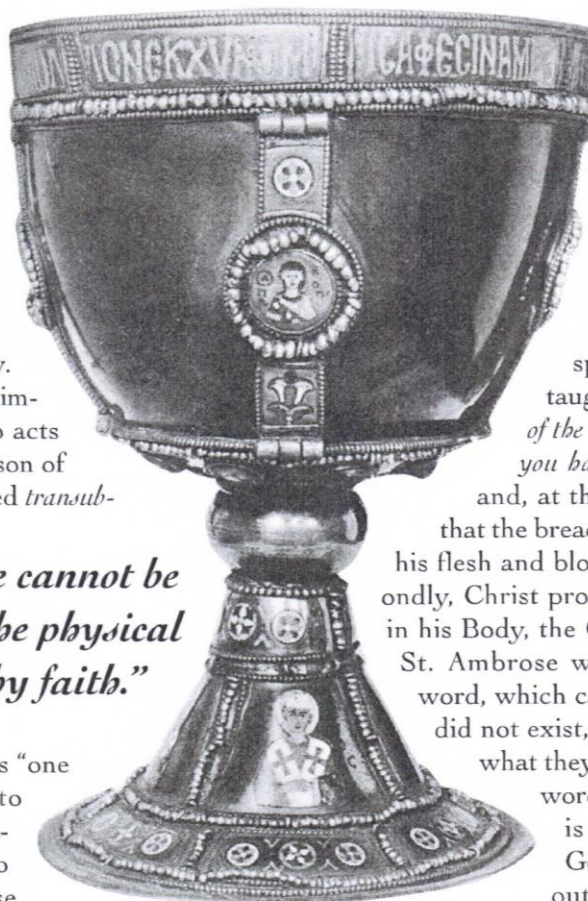
The Real Presence

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. ~ 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

JESUS IS PRESENT in many different ways to his people, but he is most present in the Eucharistic species (the consecrated bread and wine). This presence is called the "Real Presence" because the bread and wine are really and substantially changed into Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. They are changed by Christ himself, through the priest who acts *in persona Christi* ("in the person of Christ"). This change is called *transub-*

"The Real Presence cannot be perceived through the physical senses, but only by faith."

stantiation, a term that means "one substance has changed into another." After the consecration, the bread and wine no longer exist as such, because they have truly become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus, and will remain so as long as the Eucharistic species exists. Even the smallest crumb or tiniest drop is the Real Presence.



11th century chalice with enamel and pearls

The Church teaches that the Real Presence cannot be perceived through the physical senses, but only by faith; that is, Jesus' presence in the Eucharistic species cannot be scientifically proven or tested. But there are revealed truths (truths that assist our reason) to enable our response of faith. First, Jesus taught that *"unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you"* (Jn 6:53) and, at the Last Supper, he revealed that the bread and wine had truly become his flesh and blood (see Lk 22:19-20). Secondly, Christ promised to always be present in his Body, the Church (Mt 18:20). Third, St. Ambrose writes, "Could not Christ's word, which can make from nothing what did not exist, change existing things into what they were not before?" In other words, if one believes that Christ is the Word through which God creates the entire world out of nothing by saying "Let there be," how much easier it is to believe that he changes the bread and wine into himself. Lastly, throughout the centuries many Eucharistic miracles have occurred. In these miracles, one

is able to physically see that the bread and wine have changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus, such as in the Eucharistic Miracle at Lanciano, Italy in the eighth century. Having been kept in a sealed receptacle for 1200 years, the miracle can still be seen today. A hymn written by St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century beautifully expresses the Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist:

*Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore
Masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more,
See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.*

*Seeing, touching, tasting are in thee deceived;
How says trusty hearing? that shall be be-
lieved;
What God's Son has told me, take for truth
I do;
Truth himself speaks truly or there's nothing
true (CCC 1381).¹*

The Church encourages worship of the Eucharist because of the abiding Real Presence of Christ that persists in the con-

secrated bread and wine. For practical reasons, only the consecrated bread is reserved and kept in a holy and prominent place in the church (called the tabernacle). This worship of the Blessed Sacrament (the Eucharist) is expressed through our signs of reverence (kneeling, bowing, and the Sign of the Cross) and culminates in the long-standing tradition called Adoration. In Adoration, the Blessed Sacrament is taken out of the tabernacle and displayed on the altar so that the faithful can come and pray and worship in silence before Christ who is hidden in this consecrated bread.

Pope John Paul II explained that "Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease"² (CCC 1373-1381).

*"The abiding Real
Presence of Christ
persists in the
consecrated
bread and
wine."*

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas (attr.), *Adoro te devote*; tr. Gerard Manley Hopkins

² John Paul II, *Dominicae Cenae*, 3

history of the mass

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ~ 1 Corinthians 10:16

FOR SOME, the Mass (The Celebration of the Eucharist) may appear as a confusing conglomeration of rituals, making it difficult to worship. This generates a number of questions. Where do all these rituals come from? Are they biblical? What do they mean?

"Father . . . look with favor on these offerings and accept them as once you accepted the gifts of your servant Abel, the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith, and the bread and wine offered by your priest Melchizedek" (*The Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer I).

More than anything else, the Mass is a sacrifice that re-presents (makes present again) the one single sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as a memorial of his Passover; in fact it is often called the Sacrifice of the Mass. Before he was given up to death, Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. This took place during the Jewish feast of Passover when the whole People of Israel celebrate their liberation from slavery in Egypt. Taking the common elements of this feast (bread, wine, and the sacrificial lamb), Jesus substituted himself as the perfect lamb and changed the bread and wine into his body and blood. He did this in preparation for his supreme sacrifice of love on the cross that would make our salvation possible.

Along with the Passover, other Old Testa-

ment sacrifices serve as well to foreshadow the sacrifice of Christ. Abel offered God the firstlings of his flock, and "*the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering*" (Gn 4:4). Abel's righteousness was pleasing to God and, out of envy, his brother Cain killed him. In a similar manner, the ruling body of the Jews, Jesus' own people, ensured Jesus' death.

Later, in the life of Abraham, God asked for the sacrifice of his son, Isaac. This was Abraham's most challenging and painful test of faith. Isaac was his only son.

Abraham, who loved God, went up the mountain to sacrifice his son out of obedience to the Lord. But an angel called out to Abraham: "*Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me*" (Gn 22:12). Abraham's offering of Isaac reminds us of the perfect offering of Jesus, the only Son of the Father, on the cross. The once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus is re-presented (made present) every time we celebrate the Mass.

Another sacrifice God found pleasing was that of the priest-king Melchizedek, who offered bread and wine and called down a blessing upon Abraham. Jesus, who is our new and eternal priest-king, also chose to offer bread and wine at the time of the Last Supper. Included in this offering was a blessing that called upon the Holy Spirit to sanctify the Church.

*"The once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus
is re-presented every
time we celebrate the Mass."*



Statue of Melchizedek on the exterior of the Cathedral of Chartres, France, dating from the 13th century

The Mass and the Early Church

The Acts of the Apostles tells us a great deal about the early celebration of the Eucharist. By the time of Paul's preaching, there seems to be a definite practice of coming together to break bread on Sunday (see Acts 20:7).

Most of the early Christians were Jewish converts, and the way they worshiped in the synagogue shaped their celebration of Mass. The structure of Scripture readings and responses are adapted from the liturgy of the synagogue.

From a letter written about 150 AD, by a Christian philosopher named Justin, it is clear that the Mass had developed very early into its present structure. He wrote that the Christians gathered on the day of the sun (Sunday) and "the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read" (Liturgy of the Word). After the "presider" exhorted the assembly to "imitate the good examples" of the readings (Homily), bread and wine were brought forward (Presentation of the Gifts) and prayers were said (Eucharistic Prayer). Justin wrote that the bread and wine were called Eucharist because "by the Eucharistic (Thanksgiving) prayer," this food is changed into "the flesh and blood of the incarnated Jesus" (Consecration). Next, "there is the distribution to each and the participation in the Eucharistic elements" (Communion). During the time of Justin, Christians were persecuted and sometimes killed because of their faith. Consequently, the liturgy or worship service was kept simple and the place of worship kept unadorned since they had to meet in secret.

*A deacon lights the
Paschal Candle in
preparation for Mass
during the Easter
season*

*"The Mass developed very early
into its present structure."*

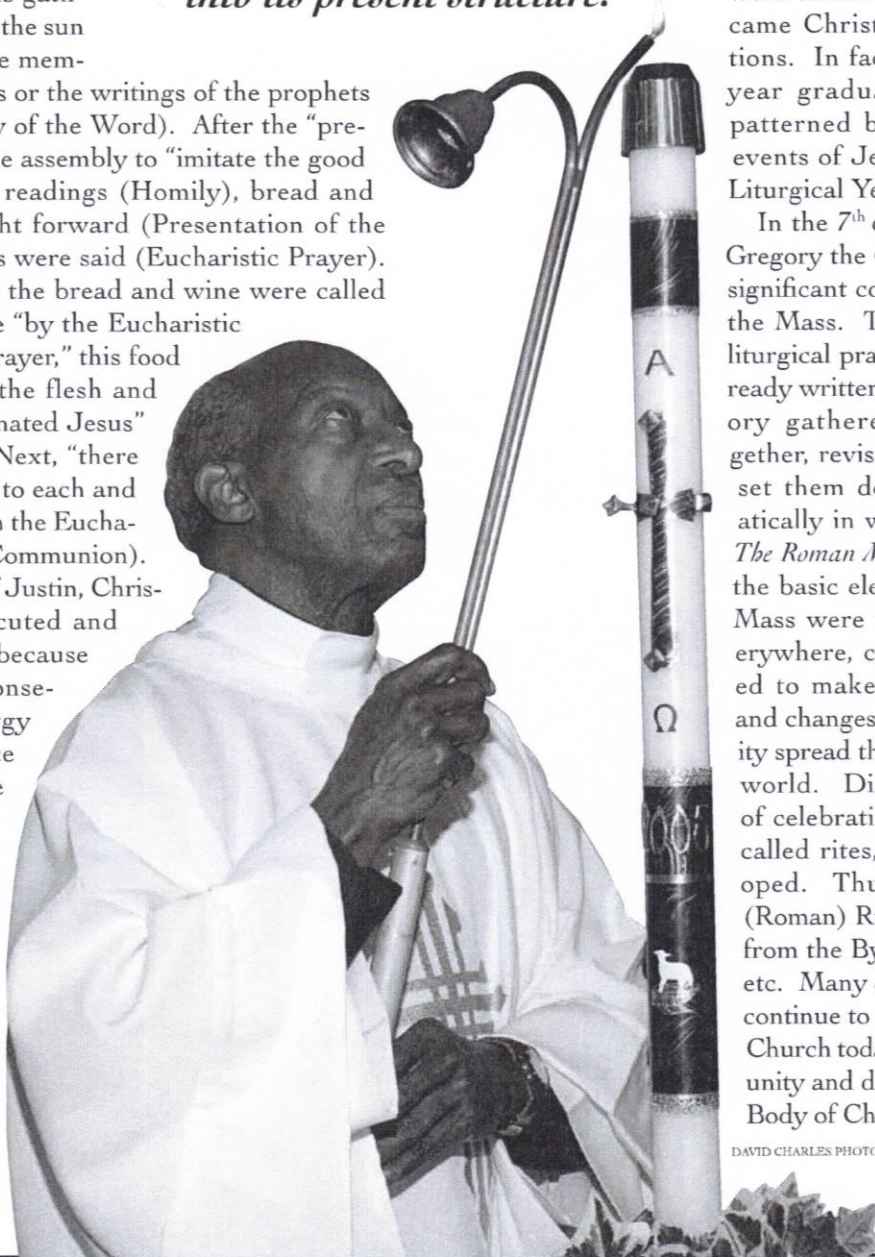
The Mass and the Middle Ages

Once Christianity was no longer persecuted and Christians were free to practice their faith openly, large public buildings called basilicas became places of worship. The Mass became more elaborate without alteration to its basic structure. In Rome, persons of honor and authority wore clothing that was made from fine materials and meant to display the distinction they held in society as public servants. With a similar understanding and authority, bishops, priests and deacons began to wear vestments to display their distinct roles in virtue of their office as servants of the People of God, the Church. Also,

days that had once been feasts in honor of various Greek and Roman gods were taken over and became Christian celebrations. In fact, the whole year gradually became patterned by the major events of Jesus' life (the Liturgical Year).

In the 7th century Pope Gregory the Great made a significant contribution to the Mass. Though many liturgical prayers were already written, Pope Gregory gathered them together, revised them, and set them down systematically in what is called *The Roman Missal*. While the basic elements of the Mass were the same everywhere, cultures tended to make adaptations and changes as Christianity spread throughout the world. Different ways of celebrating the Mass, called rites, were developed. Thus, the Latin (Roman) Rite is different from the Byzantine Rite, etc. Many different rites continue to survive in the Church today, as a sign of unity and diversity in the Body of Christ.

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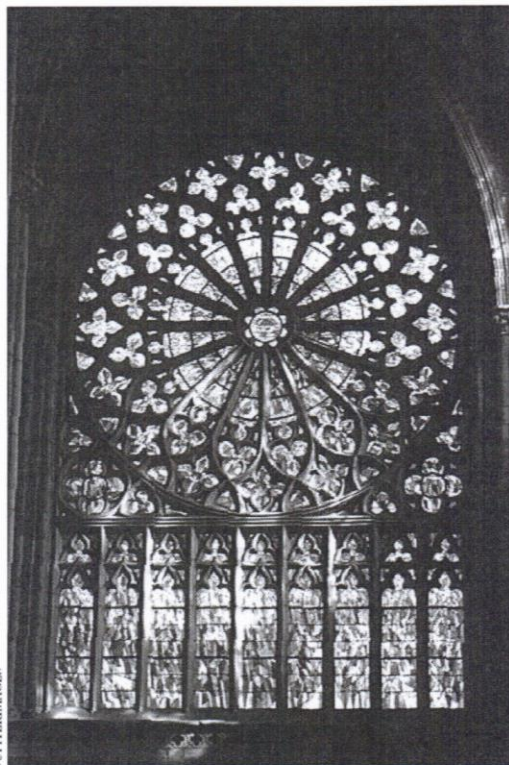
The Mass and the Council of Trent

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), like other major Church councils, was a gathering of the bishops or their representatives with the Pope in order to discuss the issues of the day in light of Catholic teaching. This Council was convened to make clear what aspects of the faith the Protestant Reformers were rejecting and to restate the Church's official teaching.

Many of the reformers rejected the sacrificial nature of the Mass and disbelieved in the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. The Council Fathers found it necessary to define the sacrificial nature of the celebration and to emphasize Catholic teaching that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist — body, blood, soul, and divinity — under the appearance of bread and wine. This teaching led to a genuine reform of the liturgy that developed a disciplined order for the celebration of Mass called the Tridentine Mass. This form of celebration, which was highly structured and very beautiful, was intended to emphasize the tremendous holiness associated with celebrating the Eucharist and being in the presence of and actually receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The Mass and Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was convened to foster renewal and increase the vitality of the Christian life. With this aim in mind, the Pope and



“Vatican II, like all other Church councils, recognized the liturgy as the principal source of power and grace for the Church.”

the bishops launched a reform of the liturgy. Many bishops around the world had expressed concern over a lack of participation in the Mass. In order to correct this, the Council Fathers decided, among other things, to allow the use of the vernacular (everyday language instead of Latin) in the liturgy, and mandated a more abundant use of Sacred Scripture. They also called for a revision in the *Roman Missal*, the book of prayers used at Mass, to include a wider variety of prayers.

Vatican II, like all other Church councils, recognized the liturgy as the principal source of power and grace for the Church. By keeping in mind the rich cultural traditions found throughout the world and by allowing for greater freedom in how the Mass could be celebrated, the liturgy which emerged from Vatican II has increased the participation of the faithful and, in many ways, has renewed the Church. Pope John Paul II has said that

Catholics should give thanks for “the fact that the table of the Word of God is now more abundantly furnished for all ... for the increased participation of the faithful ... in the Eucharist ... for the radiant vitality of so many Christian communities, a vitality drawn from the wellspring of the Liturgy” (*Vicesimus Quintus Annus*). Like the Samaritan woman at the well with Jesus, we, too, at the wellspring of liturgy hear him say, “whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst” (Jn 4:14).

(CCC 1333, 1345)

THE PARTS OF THE MASS

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.... When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. ~ Luke 24:27, 30

AT THE LAST SUPPER, on the night when Jesus was betrayed, he instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout all time until that day that he would come again. Through the celebration of the Mass, the Church remembers his death and Resurrection, brings the saving effects of his sacrifice into the present, and nourishes her people with the Paschal Banquet in which Christ is eaten and the heart is filled with his grace.

The Mass is a celebration of the Paschal mystery of Christ. The Paschal mystery refers to his saving work accomplished by his Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension. A step-by-step walk through the Mass can help us understand how this central mystery of the faith is celebrated and made present every time the People of God gather to worship.

Opening Rites

Processional: The Mass begins with a processional. The altar is revered by all in procession because it represents the table of the Lord. It is the place of sacrifice, the holy place. Those in the procession include the altar servers, reader(s), a deacon if present, concelebrating priests (if any), and the main celebrant who is the priest (or bishop) that will preside over the celebration. They process in where the people are gathered, make a sign of reverence toward the altar, and take their appropriate seats.

Greeting: "[W]here two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20). The priest leads the people in the sign of the cross and greets them in the name of the Lord.

Penitential Rite: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9:13). In order to celebrate the Mass worthily, the priest invites all those present to participate in the penitential rite, which the whole congregation carries out through a communal confession of sin and absolution from the priest. True worship

requires repentance of sin and reconciliation; we must be reconciled with God and one another. This rite can be carried out in several ways but the two most common forms are the Confiteor (which means "I confess") and the Kyrie Eleison (which means "Lord, have mercy"). Both prayers are our recognition of sin and plea for God's mercy. Confident that God never turns away a contrite heart and resting on the assurance of the Church entrusted with his mercy, the priest then leads the people in a hymn of praise.

The Gloria: "Ascribe to the Lord, O Heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy array" (Ps 29:1-2). Forgiveness of all venial sins, the people

are now ready to praise God with the great hymn called the Gloria. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased" (Lk 2:14). This is an ancient hymn of praise and thanksgiving for all God has done, is doing, and will ever do for his people. In this way, those gathered unite themselves with those in Heaven who continually worship God in the same manner: "And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen'" (Rv 7:11-12). The Gloria is either

*"The Mass is a celebration
of the Paschal mystery
of Christ."*



Wheatfield at sunset

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sung or said on all Sundays except for the seasons of Advent and Lent, on solemnities and feasts, and on special, more solemn celebrations.

Collect: *"The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord accepts my prayer"* (Ps 6:9). After the Gloria, the priest invites the people to pray, and together with him they observe a brief silence to place themselves in the presence of God and call to mind their petitions. The priest then prays the opening prayer, also known as the *collect*, which expresses the main theme of the Mass. The priest's final words of the prayer address a petition to the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

The Liturgy of the Word

"Blessed ... are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk 11:28).

Readings: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Mt 4:4). Christ is present when his Word is proclaimed, and his Word is food for the soul. Here we meet Christ at the Table of his Word. The Word of God feeds and instructs us and prepares us to receive the Body of Christ in the Eucharist. The first reading is usually from the Old Testament and is followed by a **response** from the book of Psalms in Scripture. If the celebration is a solemn one, a **second reading** from the New Testament other than the Gospels is read. Following these is the proclamation of the **Gospel**. The Gospel is especially venerated because it is an account of the life of the Lord and contains the message of salvation. Frequently, the book of the Gospels is carried in procession with candles, accompanied by the singing of an Alleluia verse. The people stand while the Gospel is read.

The Homily: *"I strive ... for all ... that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Col 2:1-2). After the readings,

the bishop, priest, or deacon explains these Scriptures and encourages reflection on the Word of God in order to prepare the people's hearts and minds for the Eucharist. He exhorts the people to live by the Word that gives life.

The Profession of Faith: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God"* (Jn 6:68-69). The Profession of Faith or Creed is a summary of all that the Church believes. It is an ancient formula that expresses the central truths of the faith. Every Sunday (and on other solemn feasts) the

Creed is prayed to remind those present of their baptismal declaration of faith and to unite the congregation as a community of believers preparing to approach the table of the Lord's Body and Blood. The Nicene Creed includes the phrase, "by the power of the Holy Spirit, he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man," at which point the people bow (and on the feasts of Christmas and Annunciation they genuflect).

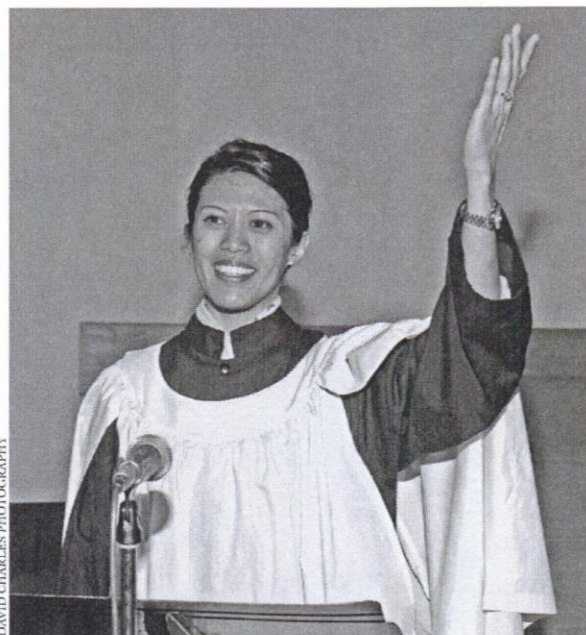
The Prayers of the Faithful: *"The Lord answers you in the day of trouble! ... May he remember all your offerings ... May he grant you your heart's desire ... and fulfill all your petitions"* (Ps 20:1-5). The Prayers of the Faithful or General Intercessions remind

the congregation that they are united with the whole Church in their concern for their own needs and the needs of others. Petitions are made at this time for the Pope and bishops, government leaders, the poor and the sick, and any other special needs present in the local community or the universal Church. There is often a time of silence so individuals can offer their own personal needs and unite them to the prayer of the whole Church.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

"This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19).

"Christ is present when his Word is proclaimed, and his Word is food for the soul."



DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY

A cantor leading the responsorial Psalm at Mass

The Preparation of the Gifts: *"The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps 51:17). "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom 12:1).* At the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the altar is prepared and the gifts of bread and wine which will become Christ's Body and Blood are brought forward by the altar servers or representatives of the congregation. These gifts are received by the celebrant and are placed upon the altar. He blesses them, washes his hands (a sign of purification), and invites the people to pray that the sacrifice will be acceptable to God.

The Eucharistic Prayer: *"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come ... he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption" (Heb 9:11-12).* The Mass is truly a sacrifice, a re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. Christ's death is made present in sacrament and thus the congregation is actually at Calvary, present at the foot of the cross. The Eucharistic Prayer contains many elements, but the most important is the consecration of the Eucharist, which uses Jesus' words of institution at the Last Supper. When the priest says these words, he acts in the person of Christ; at that moment, the bread and wine are changed into the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The Consecration is the most sacred act of the priesthood and from it springs the very source and life of the Church, the Eucharist.

The Lord's Prayer: *"And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Mt 6:7-8).* After the Eucharistic Prayer, the people pray in the words that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, the Lord's Prayer. This prayer is a petition for both natural and supernatural nourishment and again implores God for his mercy to grant forgiveness from sin so that

what is holy (the Eucharist) may be given to those who have been made holy through God the Father's love and mercy.

The Sign of Peace: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn 14:27).* The priest invites the congregation to exchange a sign of peace (either a handshake or kiss).

The Lamb of God: *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rv 5:12).* The Agnus Dei ("Lamb of God") reminds the people that the Body and Blood of Jesus which they are about to receive is truly the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Communion: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn 6:53-54).* *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor 10:16).* To receive the Lord in the Eucharist is the greatest privilege of those in complete union with the Church. The Christian should approach the Eucharist humbly, and without any stain of serious sin; also the Church requires that a one-hour fast from food be observed by those going to Communion. After a sign of reverence (a bow), Holy Communion is received either in the hand or on the tongue. A time of meditation and thanksgiving follows this momentous gift.

The Concluding Rite

The concluding rite consists of the priest's greeting and final blessing, followed by the dismissal, which sends each of those present back to the world to do good works while praising and blessing the Lord: *"Go in peace to love and serve the Lord" (The Roman Missal, Concluding Rite).* The congregation responds: *"Thanks be to God."* The celebrant and those who had processed in with him then process out.

(CCC 1348-1355)

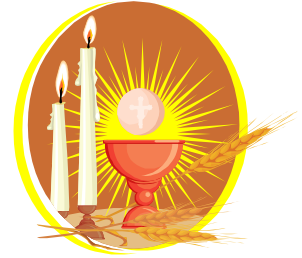
"Christ's death is made present in sacrament and thus the congregation is actually at Calvary, present at the foot of the cross."



DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Sacrament of the Eucharist



271. What is the Eucharist? (CCC, nos. 1322-1323, 1409)

The Eucharist is the very sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus which he instituted to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until his return in glory. Thus he entrusted to his Church this memorial of his death and Resurrection. It is a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet, in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.

272. When did Jesus Christ institute the Eucharist? (CCC, nos. 1323, 1337-1340)

Jesus instituted the Eucharist on Holy Thursday “the night on which he was betrayed” (1 Corinthians 11:23), as he celebrated the Last Supper with his apostles.

273. How did he institute the Eucharist? (CCC, nos. 1337-1340, 1365, 1406)

After he had gathered with his apostles in the Cenacle, Jesus took bread in his hands. He broke it and gave it to them saying, “Take this and eat it, all of you; this is my Body which will be given up for you”. Then, he took the cup of wine in his hands and said, “Take this and drink of this, all of you. This is the cup of my Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me”.

274. What does the Eucharist represent in the life of the Church? (CCC, nos. 1324-1327, 1407)

It is the source and summit of all Christian life. In the Eucharist, the sanctifying action of God in our regard and our worship of him reach their high point. It contains the whole spiritual good of the Church, Christ himself, our Pasch. Communion with divine life and the unity of the People of God are both expressed and effected by the Eucharist. Through the eucharistic celebration we are united already with the liturgy of heaven and we have a foretaste of eternal life.

275. What are the names for this sacrament? (CCC, nos. 1328-1332)

The unfathomable richness of this sacrament is expressed in different names which evoke its various aspects. The most common names are: the Eucharist, Holy Mass, the Lord’s Supper, the Breaking of the Bread, the Eucharistic Celebration, the Memorial of the passion, death and Resurrection of the Lord, the Holy Sacrifice, the Holy and Divine Liturgy, the Sacred Mysteries, the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and Holy Communion.

276. Where does the Eucharist fit in the divine plan of salvation? (CCC, nos. 1333-1344)

The Eucharist was foreshadowed in the Old Covenant above all in the annual Passover meal celebrated every year by the Jews with unleavened bread to commemorate their hasty, liberating departure from Egypt. Jesus foretold it in his teaching and he instituted it when he celebrated the Last Supper with his apostles in a Passover meal. The Church, faithful to the command of her Lord,

“Do this in memory of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24), has always celebrated the Eucharist, especially on Sunday, the day of the Resurrection of Jesus.

277. How is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist carried out? (CCC, nos. 1345-1355, 1408)

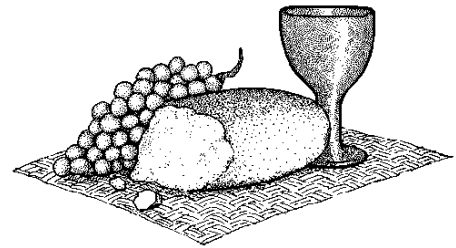
The Eucharist unfolds in two great parts which together form one, single act of worship. The Liturgy of the Word involves proclaiming and listening to the Word of God. The Liturgy of the Eucharist includes the presentation of the bread and wine, the prayer or the anaphora containing the words of consecration, and communion.

278. Who is the minister for the celebration of the Eucharist? (CCC, nos. 1348, 1411)

The celebrant of the Eucharist is a validly ordained priest (bishop or priest) who acts in the Person of Christ the Head and in the name of the Church.

279. What are the essential and necessary elements for celebrating the Eucharist? (CCC, no. 1412)

The essential elements are wheat bread and grape wine.



280. In what way is the Eucharist a memorial of the sacrifice of Christ? (CCC, nos. 1362-1367)

The Eucharist is a memorial in the sense that it makes present and actual the sacrifice which Christ offered to the Father on the cross, once and for all on behalf of mankind. The sacrificial character of the Holy Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution, “This is my Body which is given for you” and “This cup is the New Covenant in my Blood that will be shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20). The sacrifice of the cross and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one and the same sacrifice. The priest and the victim are the same; only the manner of offering is different: in a bloody manner on the cross, in an unbloody manner in the Eucharist.

281. In what way does the Church participate in the eucharistic sacrifice? (CCC, nos. 1368-1372, 1414)

In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, their suffering, their prayers, their work, are united to those of Christ. In as much as it is a sacrifice, the Eucharist is likewise offered for all the faithful, living and dead, in reparation for the sins of all and to obtain spiritual and temporal benefits from God. The Church in heaven is also united to the offering of Christ.

282. How is Christ present in the Eucharist? (CCC, nos. 1373-1375, 1413)

Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist in a unique and incomparable way. He is present in a true, real and substantial way, with his Body and his Blood, with his Soul and his Divinity. In the Eucharist, therefore, there is present in a sacramental way, that is, under the Eucharistic species of bread and wine, Christ whole and entire, God and Man.

283. What is the meaning of transubstantiation? (CCC, nos. 1376-1377, 1413)

Transubstantiation means the change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of wine into the substance of his Blood. This change is brought about in the eucharistic prayer through the efficacy of the word of Christ and by the action of the Holy Spirit. However, the outward characteristics of bread and wine, that is the “eucharistic species”, remain unaltered.

284. Does the breaking of the bread divide Christ? (CCC, nos. 1377)

The breaking of the bread does not divide Christ. He is present whole and entire in each of the eucharistic species and in each of their parts.



285. How long does the presence of Christ last in the Eucharist? (CCC, nos. 1377)

The presence of Christ continues in the Eucharist as long as the eucharistic species subsist.

286. What kind of worship is due to the sacrament of the Eucharist? (CCC, nos. 1378-1381, 1418)

The worship due to the sacrament of the Eucharist, whether during the celebration of the Mass or outside it, is the worship of latria, that is, the adoration given to God alone. The Church guards with the greatest care Hosts that have been consecrated. She brings them to the sick and to other persons who find it impossible to participate at Mass. She also presents them for the solemn adoration of the faithful and she bears them in processions. The Church encourages the faithful to make frequent visits to adore the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle.

287. Why is the Holy Eucharist the paschal banquet? (CCC, nos. 1382-1384, 1391-1396)

The Holy Eucharist is the paschal banquet in as much as Christ sacramentally makes present his Passover and gives us his Body and Blood, offered as food and drink, uniting us to himself and to one another in his sacrifice.

288. What is the meaning of the altar? (CCC, nos. 1383, 1410)

The altar is the symbol of Christ himself who is present both as sacrificial victim (the altar of the sacrifice) and as food from heaven which is given to us (the table of the Lord).

289. When does the Church oblige her members to participate at Holy Mass? (CCC, nos. 1389, 1417)

The Church obliges the faithful to participate at Holy Mass every Sunday and on holy days of obligation. She recommends participation at Holy Mass on other days as well.

290. When must one receive Holy Communion? (CCC, no. 1389)



The Church recommends that the faithful, if they have the required dispositions, receive Holy Communion whenever they participate at Holy Mass. However, the Church obliges them to receive Holy Communion at least once a year during the Easter season.

291. What is required to receive Holy Communion? (CCC, nos. 1385-1389, 1415)

To receive Holy Communion one must be fully incorporated into the Catholic Church and be in the state of grace, that is, not conscious of being in mortal sin. Anyone who is conscious of having committed a grave sin must first receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before going to Communion. Also important for those receiving Holy Communion are a spirit of recollection and prayer, observance of the fast prescribed by the Church, and an appropriate disposition of the body (gestures and dress) as a sign of respect for Christ.

292. What are the fruits of Holy Communion? (CCC, nos. 1391-1397, 1416)

Holy Communion increases our union with Christ and with his Church. It preserves and renews the life of grace received at Baptism and Confirmation and makes us grow in love for our neighbor. It strengthens us in charity, wipes away venial sins and preserves us from mortal sin in the future.

293. When is it possible to give Holy Communion to other Christians? (CCC, nos. 1398-1401)

Catholic ministers may give Holy Communion licitly to members of the Oriental Churches which are not in full communion with the Catholic Church whenever they ask for it of their own will and possess the required dispositions. Catholic ministers may licitly give Holy Communion to members of other ecclesial communities only if, in grave necessity, they ask for it of their own will, possess the required dispositions, and give evidence of holding the Catholic faith regarding the sacrament.

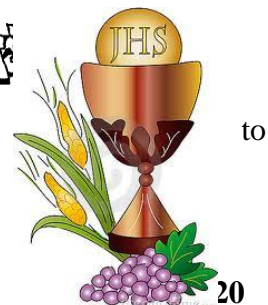
294. Why is the Eucharist a “pledge of future glory”? (CCC, nos. 1402-1405)

The Eucharist is a pledge of future glory because it fills us with every grace and heavenly blessing. It fortifies us for our pilgrimage in this life and makes us long for eternal life. It unites us already to Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, to the Church in heaven and to the Blessed Virgin and all the saints.

In the Eucharist, we “break the one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ.” (Saint Ignatius of Antioch)

Holy Eucharist Reading List

Here are some really good books that are easy read and that will help you to grow in your own relationship with our Eucharistic Lord.



101 Questions and Answers on the Eucharist, by Fr. Giles Dimock, OP. Paperback: 160 pages. Paulist Press (May 31, 2006).

Biblical Basis for the Eucharist, by John Salza. Paperback: 240 pages. Our Sunday Visitor (September 15, 2008).

A Biblical Walk Through the Mass: Understanding What We Say and Do in the Liturgy, by Edward Sri. Paperback: 160 pages. Ascension Press (January 3, 2011).

Catholic for a Reason III: Scripture and the Mystery of the Mass, by Scott Hahn and Regis J. Flaherty (Editors). Paperback: 203 pages. Emmaus Road Publishing (June 2004).

Celebrating the Holy Eucharist, by Francis Cardinal Arinze. Paperback: 128 pages. Ignatius Press (October 30, 2006).

Do I Have to Go?: 101 Questions about the Mass, the Eucharist, and Your Spiritual Life, by Matthew Pinto and Chris Stefanick. Paperback: 175 pages. Ascension Press (January 2008).

The Eucharist for Beginners: Sacraments, Sacrifice, and Communion, by Kenneth J. Howell. Paperback: 155 pages. Catholic Answers (January 14, 2006).

How-To Book of the Mass: Everything You Need to Know But No One Ever Taught You (Revised and Expanded Edition), by Michael Dubruiel. Paperback: 272 pages. Our Sunday Visitor (March 19, 2007).

I'm Not Being Fed!: Discovering the Food that Satisfies the Soul, by Jeff Cavins. Paperback: 230 pages. Ascension Press (September 15, 2005).

If Your Mind Wanders at Mass, by Thomas Howard. Paperback: 125 pages. Ignatius Press (March 2001).

Lamb's Supper, by Scott Hahn. Hardcover: 174 pages. Doubleday (November 9, 1999).

Pocket Guide to the Mass, by Michael Dubruiel. Paperback: 80 pages. Our Sunday Visitor (March 19, 2007).

So Why Do We Do This? Understanding the Why and How of the Mass (Participant's Wkbk), by Mark Shea and Diane Eriksen. Hardcover: 48 pages. Sapientia Press (January 2005).

With Us Today: On the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, by Fr. John A. Hardon. Paperback: 185 pages. Veritas Press (April 2001).

First Communion Books for Children



Called to His Supper: A Preparation for First Eucharist, by Jeannine Timko Lechner. Paperback: 64 pages. Our Sunday Visitor (August 17, 2007).

Celebrating Eucharist: A Mass Book for Children, by Twenty-Third Publications. Paperback: 36 pages. Twenty-Third Publications (September 23, 2011). *Includes new Missal changes.*

Child's Guide to First Holy Communion, by Elizabeth Ficocelli. Hardcover: 32 pages. Paulist Press (January 2003).

Eucharistic Adoration Coloring Book, by Katherine Sotnik. Paperback: 72 pages. Ignatius Press (January 31, 2005).

First Eucharist Activities for Primary Grades, by Jean Larkin. Paperback: 32 pages. Pflaum Publishing Group (July 2005). *There is also a 2011 Printing with new Missal changes.*

Friendship with Jesus: Pope Benedict XVI talks to Children on Their First Holy Communion, by Amy Welborn. Hardcover: 32 pages. Ignatius Press (September 1, 2011).

Jesus Speaks to Me about the Mass, by Angela M. Burrin. Hardcover: 48 pages. Word Among Us Press (March 2011).

Jesus Speaks to Me on My First Holy Communion, by Angela M. Burrin. Hardcover: 39 pages. Word Among Us Press (January 2009).

The Mass for Children, by Jude Winkler. Hardcover: 32 pages. Catholic Book Publishing Company (September 1988).

The Mass Book for Children, by Rosemarie Gortler and Donna Piscitelli. Paperback: 48 pages. Our Sunday Visitor (December 1, 2004).

The Miracle of St. Nicholas, by Gloria Whelan. Hardcover: 32 pages. Bethlehem Books (October 1997).

The New Saint Joseph First Communion Catechism, by Bennet Kelley. Paperback: 64 pages. Catholic Book Publishing Company (March 1991).

Today I Made My First Communion, by Dianne Ahern. Hardcover: 56 pages. Aunt Dee's Attic (March 20, 2003).

The Weight of a Mass: A Tale of Faith, by Josephine Nobisso. Hardcover: 32 pages. Liturgical Press (September 30, 2005).

We Share in the Eucharist, by Francoise Darcy-Berube and Jean-Paul Berube. Paperback: 56 pages. Twenty-Third Publications (December 14, 2009).