

RCIA: SESSION FIFTEEN

THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

Week: 23/01/23 - 29/01/23

Catechism References: #1323, 1325, 1337, 1340, 1345, 1363, 1365, 1367, 1376-1377, 1391, 1393, 1396-1398, 1403-1406

Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; ...he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and ... abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:51, 54, 56).

Church tradition teaches how the Eucharist began at the Last Supper and how the early community obeyed Jesus' command to "break bread" in his name (Acts 2:42).

One of the seven sacraments of the Church, indeed the greatest of the sacraments, described by the Church in this way:

"The Most Holy Eucharist is the most august sacrament, in which Christ the Lord himself is contained, offered, and received, and by which the Church constantly lives and grows. The Eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated over the centuries, is the summit and the source of all Christian worship and life; it signifies and effects the unity of the people of God and achieves the building up of the Body of Christ. The other sacraments and all the ecclesiastical works of the apostolate are closely related to the Holy Eucharist and are directed to it." Canon Law 897.

Although the Eucharist is one sacrament, there are three essential aspects to which the Church points: (1) sacrifice; (2) communion; (3) Real Presence of Christ.

The Church calls the faithful to respond in faith to these three aspects of the Eucharist:

“The faithful are to hold the Eucharist in highest honour, taking part in the celebration of the Most August Sacrifice, receiving the sacrament devoutly and frequently, and worshipping it with supreme adoration....” Canon Law 898.

What is the Eucharist?

The term “Eucharist” originates from the Greek word *eucharistia*, meaning thanksgiving. The Eucharist is much more than a common meal; it is first and foremost a holy sacrifice. “The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished” (CCC §1360)

The Last Supper of Jesus was the Jewish Passover Supper. It was the yearly renewal of God’s old covenant with the people of Israel. On the night God slew the firstborn of the Egyptians so that they would release the Israelites from slavery, the people of Israel were ordered by God to celebrate the Passover Supper. They were to kill a lamb, smear its blood on the doorposts of their homes, and then eat the lamb. As the Angel of God came to kill the firstborn, he would “pass over” any house which was marked by the blood of the lamb – the blood of the covenant – and those inside would not die. The next day the Israelites left Egypt and God brought them eventually to the land He had promised, and made them His special people: the people through which Jesus would come into the world!

At the Last Supper, Jesus celebrated the Passover, but then He did something new: He took bread, gave thanks to His Heavenly Father, and said, “This is my body.” Then He took a cup of wine, gave thanks, and said, “This is my blood.” After this blessing, the bread was no longer bread, and the wine no longer wine: they had become Jesus’ body and blood! What Jesus would do the next day on the cross – that is, lay down His body and blood to the Apostles, and through them to the Church. We receive this gift of Jesus when we celebrate this sacrament. It may not look, taste, smell, or feel like Jesus, but it is His body and blood being given to us in a mysterious way.

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.

In the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest. The whole Christ is truly present -- body, blood, soul, and divinity -- under the appearances of bread and wine, the glorified Christ who rose from the dead. This is what the Church means when she speaks of the "Real Presence" of Christ in the Eucharist.

Who performs this miracle? Only a priest or a bishop can change bread and wine into Christ's body and blood. They have been given this power at their ordination, but it is not any human power which does this; it is Christ Himself working through the priest or bishop. Once bread and wine have been consecrated (blessed) and have become Christ's body and blood, we show them every respect. The consecrated hosts (blessed bread) are kept in the tabernacle, which should always be respected because it is the place where Christ dwells among his people.

Origin in Scripture

The story of the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus on the night before his Crucifixion is reported in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; and Luke 22:17–20) and in the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 11:23–25).

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. - Matthew 26:26-28

According to the Gospel accounts, Jesus established the practice at the Last Supper, a traditional Passover seder, when he blessed the bread, which he said was his body, and shared it with his disciples. He then shared a cup of wine with his disciples and told them that “this is the blood of my covenant, which is poured out for many.” According to St. Luke, Jesus called on his followers to repeat the ceremony in his memory, and the letters of the Apostle Paul and the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament demonstrate that early Christians believed that they were to continue the celebration as an anticipation in this life of the joys of the banquet that was to come in the kingdom of God.

Doctrinal Overview

Through Baptism Christ gives us life and through the Eucharist Christ nourishes life abundantly. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church’s life. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 10) Through the Eucharist Christ’s life, death and resurrection are made real, are made present, and are offered sacramentally (See Mystery of Faith). In the Eucharist, Christ unites his Church and all her members with his work of salvation. All ministries and sacraments of the Church are bound up with the Eucharist in which Christ, acting through the ministry of the priesthood, gives himself as an offering to the Father.

Through Eucharist the faithful individually and communally renew their promise to conform their lives to Christ. Through the Liturgies of the Word and of the Eucharist the events of Christ’s life are made present. It is through the community whose unity is created by the Eucharist that the faithful are commissioned and empowered to evangelize. In Holy Communion, Christ completes the initiation of the faithful, nourishes them throughout their lives, and consoles them at the time of death with Viaticum.

What is this sacrament called?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church provides various names for the Eucharist (cf. CCC 1328-1332). The inexhaustible richness of this sacrament is expressed

in the different names we give it. Each name evokes certain aspects of it. It is called:

Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. The Greek words eucharistein (Cf. Lk 22:19; 1Cor 11:24) and eulogein (Cf. Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22) recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim - especially during a meal - God's works: creation, redemption, and sanctification. (CCC 1328)

The Lord's Supper, because of its connection with the supper which the Lord took with his disciples on the eve of his Passion and because it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem (Cf. 1 Cor 11:20; Rev 19:9).

The Breaking of Bread, because Jesus used this rite, part of a Jewish meal, when as master of the table he blessed and distributed the bread (Cf. Mt 14:19; 15:36; Mk 8:6, 19.), above all at the Last Supper (Cf. Mt 26:26; 1 Cor 11:24). It is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection (Cf. Lk 24:13-35), and it is this expression that the first Christians will use to designate their Eucharistic assemblies (Cf. Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11); by doing so they signified that all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him (Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17).

The Eucharistic assembly, because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church (Cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34). (CCC 1329)

The memorial of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection.

The Holy Sacrifice, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Saviour and includes the Church's offering. The terms holy sacrifice of the Mass, "sacrifice of praise," spiritual sacrifice, pure and holy sacrifice are also used (Heb 13:15; cf. 1 Pet 2:5; Ps 116:13, 17; Mal 1:11), since it completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

The Holy and Divine Liturgy, because the Church's whole liturgy finds its centre and most intense expression in the celebration of this sacrament; in the same sense we also call its celebration the Sacred Mysteries. We speak of the Most Blessed Sacrament because it is the Sacrament of sacraments.

The Eucharistic species reserved in the tabernacle are designated by this same name. (CCC 1330)

Holy Communion, because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body (Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17).

Holy Mass (Missa), because the liturgy in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished concludes with the sending forth (missio) of the faithful, so that they may fulfil God's will in their daily lives." (CCC 1332)

HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

Resources on the Eucharist:

A Short History of the Eucharist

<https://ossory.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/A-Short-History-of-the-Eucharist.pdf>

The Eucharist throughout history: A timeline

<https://denvercatholic.org/the-eucharist-throughout-history-a-timeline/>

1. Summary from the Last Supper to 100 A.D.

- a. Jesus uses Jewish Passover meal in a new way to express New Covenant; new relationship between God and humankind.
- b. Jesus asked faith of followers during this meal that through his word, bread and wine make him present.
- c. The new Passover meal or Eucharist is celebrated primarily in homes as a meal of unity among believers.
- d. The ritual of Eucharist:
 - 1) readings from Old Testament
 - 2) readings from letters and gospels that later became the New Testament
 - 3) explanation or homily about readings and teachings of Jesus
 - 4) sharing Jesus' presence through bread and wine in context of a meal— at first an actual meal and later a stylized one

2. Summary from 100-600 A.D.

- a. Eucharist celebrated in homes, very simply until 313.
- b. Eucharist taken in hand and often taken home to sick or for communion during week.
- c. The Eucharist is not celebrated daily.
- d. In 313, public buildings used for the Eucharist.
- e. Prayers and rituals become more formalised rather than spontaneous.
- f. Renewal needed even by 384 when the Eucharistic celebration is changed from Greek to Latin

3. Summary from 600 to 1850 A.D.

- a. Style of prayer changes
 - 1) end to period of improvisation
 - 2) prayers compiled and formalized
 - 3) concern over minor details in rite
- b. Gulf between clergy and people because of
 - 1) elaboration and complication of ceremonies
 - 2) clergy rose in social status beyond laity
 - 3) bishops take on style of princes
- c. Laity felt unworthy to receive communion, therefore, Easter Duty promulgated in 1212.

4. Vatican II

The modern day movement for renewal was officially accepted in 1962 when the Bishops of the Second Vatican Council:

- a. Recognized the need for use of the vernacular for intelligent participation.
- b. Encouraged reception of Communion as part of each Eucharist under appearance of both with bread and wine.
- c. Urged greater use of Scripture and preaching.
- d. Priest facing people to underline once again the communal aspect of the Eucharist.
- e. The Prayer of the Faithful to encourage spontaneous prayer and the Kiss of Peace to express our fellowship.

When we receive Holy Communion, we are receiving Jesus Himself: His life and all that is His to give. In exchange, we pledge our lives to Him.

How should we receive Holy Communion?

We should be properly prepared by focusing our minds on Jesus, and preparing our hearts by prayer. If we have committed a serious sin (breaking any of the 10 Commandments) we are not permitted to receive Communion until we have been to Confession; to receive Communion in a state of sin is itself a serious sin and a sacrilege. We should receive our Lord joyfully, as the promise of eternal life, and remember to say a prayer of thanksgiving after receiving Him.

Those who receive Communion may receive either in the hand or on the tongue, and the decision should be that of the individual receiving, not of the person distributing Communion. If Communion is received in the hand, the hands should first of all be clean. If one is right handed the left hand should rest upon the right. The host will then be laid in the palm of the left hand and then taken by the right hand to the mouth. It is not appropriate to reach out with the fingers and take the host from the person distributing.

The person distributing Communion says audibly to each person approaching, "The Body of Christ." This formula should not be altered, as it is a proclamation which calls for a response of faith on the part of the one who receives. The communicant should audibly respond, "Amen," indicating by that response his or her belief that this small wafer of bread, the wine in this chalice are in reality the body and blood of Christ the Lord.

When one receives from the chalice, the same proclamation is made by the person distributing Communion and the Communicant again responds, "Amen." It should be noted that it is never permissible for a person to dip the host he or she has received into the chalice. If, for some reason, the communicant is not able or willing to drink from the cup then that person should receive only under the form of bread.

Mystery of Faith

One way to enter the mystery of the Eucharist is through the three foundational events of the Paschal Mystery: Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

1) Holy Thursday: The Mass is a sacred meal at which we eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Lord and become that Body by the action of the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist embodies the mystery of our incorporation into the very life of the Trinity.

2) Good Friday: Through the biblical understanding of anamnesis (memorial), the Eucharist enables us to become present to the once-and-for-all redeeming sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. The Eucharist embodies the mystery of our salvation and redemption in Christ.

3) Easter Sunday: At the Eucharist we encounter the presence of the risen Christ. The risen Lord so identifies with his disciples that what we do to one another we do to Christ himself. "...[W]hatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40). This presence of the Body of Christ was at the heart of Saint Paul's initial transforming experience of Jesus: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4). The Eucharist embodies the real, substantial presence of the risen Christ.

Real Presence

Roman Catholics believe in the Real Presence. The elements of the consecrated bread and wine are *transubstantiated* into the body and blood of Christ: their substance is converted into the substance of the body and blood, although the outward appearances of the elements, their "accidents," remain. This teaching of the real presence is intended to emphasize the intimate relationship between Jesus and the communicant.

Eucharistic Adoration

Resources on Eucharistic Adoration:

<https://kcsj catholic.org/eucharistic-congress/adoration-resources/>

<https://perpetualeucharisticadoration.com/eucharistic-resources/>

<http://www.therealpresence.org/eucharst/book/a10.html>

<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass>

From the Eucharist comes strength to live the Christian life and zeal to share that life with others.

– St. John Paul II

Eucharistic Adoration extends the means for us to adore our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is fully and truly present in the Eucharist. The Host/Blessed Sacrament is removed from the tabernacle and placed in a monstrance for adoration.

Christ loves us without limit. He offers himself to us in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, and he invites each one of us to come visit him.

Saints of the Eucharist

Resources on Eucharistic Saints:

<https://catholicexchange.com/six-saints-devotion-to-the-eucharist/>

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=6313>

<https://www.thepriest.com/2022/04/18/eucharistic-saints/>

St. Tarcisus

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

St. Thoma Aquinas

St. Dominic

St. Peter Julian Eymard

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

St. Therese of Lisieux

St. Teresa of Avila
St. John Paul II
St. Alphonsus Liguori
St. Francisco Marto
St. Teresa of Calcutta
St. Claire
Blessed Carlo Acutis

Eucharistic Miracles

Eucharistic miracles are extraordinary events, where the Eucharist no longer appears under the form of bread and wine, but takes on the biological qualities of human flesh or blood or both.

These miracles have no scientific explanation but can be scientifically verified, and help us go beyond the visible and perceptible to the existence of something beyond, or even supernatural.

Resources on Eucharistic Miracles:

<https://www.churchpop.com/2015/06/28/5-extraordinary-eucharistic-miracles-with-pictures/>

<http://www.miracolieucaristici.org/en/liste/list.html>

<http://www.therealpresence.org/eucharst/mir/a3.html>

<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/five-eucharistic-miracles>

Miracle of Lanciano – 8th Century

The Corporal of Bolsena – 13th Century

The Hosts of Siena, Italy – 18th Century

The Miracle of Chirattakonam, India – 21st Century

The Eucharistic Miracle of Santarém – 13th Century

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer is the heart of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In this prayer, the celebrant acts in the person of Christ as head of his body, the Church. He gathers not only the bread and the wine, but the substance of our lives and joins them to Christ's perfect sacrifice, offering them to the Father.

The introductory dialogue establishes that this prayer is the prayer of the baptized and ordained, is offered in the presence of God, and has thanksgiving as its central focus. Following this dialogue, the celebrant begins the Preface, which consists of four different Eucharistic Prayers. After these prayers, communion is then given.

The following timeline follows the traditional Liturgy of the Eucharist:

Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar

Prayer over the Offering

Eucharistic Prayer

Preface

Holy, Holy, Holy

First half of prayer, including Consecration

Mystery of Faith

Second half of prayer, ending with Doxology

The Lord's Prayer

Sign of Peace

Lamb of God

Communion

Prayer after Communion

Sacred Vessels

Resource on sacred vessels used in liturgical celebrations:

<https://www.togetheratonealtar.catholic.edu.au/craft/preparing-the-church-for-mass/>

ALTAR

The altar is the table or structure on which the church's sacred meal is celebrated.



CANDLES

Candles are to be used at every liturgical celebration as a sign of reverence and festiveness.

Symbolically candles represent Christ as the light of the world.

CORPORAL

The term corporal is a Latin word that means 'body'. It is an additional smaller cloth that is placed at the centre front of the altar for the paten and chalice to be placed on. The chalice and paten will hold the Body and Blood of Christ once the words of consecration are prayed at the Eucharist.

PURIFICATOR

This cloth is used to wipe the lip of the chalice after each person drinks from the chalice.

CHALICE

The word chalice comes from the Latin word 'calix', meaning cup. The chalice is also called a sacred vessel and is held in special honour [GIRM#327] by the worshipping community as it is the cup that holds the Blood of Christ when the wine is consecrated at Mass.

PATEN

Patens or plates are what the hosts for communion are placed on. Like the chalice the paten is to be made of precious metals as it is also called a sacred vessel as it will hold the Body of Christ.

CRUETS CONTAINING WATER AND WINE

The term cruet means the bottles or jugs that hold the water or wine that are carried to the altar at the Preparation of the Gifts.



ROMAN MISSAL

The Roman Missal is the book that holds all the prayers for the celebration of the Eucharist.

AMBO

The word Ambo is a Greek word that means step or elevated. The great importance of the Word of God in the scriptures proclaimed at each Eucharistic celebration means that there is a special place for this word to be read from. From the ambo only the readings, the responsorial Psalm, and the exulted (Easter Proclamation) are to be proclaimed; it may be used also for the giving of the homily and for announcing the intentions of the Prayers of the Faithful.

LECTIONARY

The Lectionary holds all the scripture readings used during the Liturgy of the Word.

PRESIDENTIAL CHAIR

The presidential chair is the Priest's chair. From this chair the Priest presides or leads the people gathered in prayer.

During Lent we are not to use flowers as this is a penitential season. The fourth Sunday of Lent Laetare Sunday and other Solemnities, and Feasts are an opportunity to use flowers as a sign of celebration and joy.

TABERNACLE

The word "tabernacle" is English and comes from the Latin word *tabernāculum*—a ritual tent or hut. The tabernacle contains the "holy of holies," Jesus present in the Eucharist after the celebration of Mass. The word tabernacle means "dwelling place" and refers to the "tent of meeting" that the Israelites built to facilitate their worship of God in the desert (Exodus 26).

MONSTRANCE

Monstrance comes from the Latin word *monstrare*, meaning "to show." The purpose of the monstrance is to put on display a consecrated Host for those present to adore and venerate. The development of the monstrance can be traced back to the 13th century, when Eucharistic processions rose in popularity connected to the new feast of Corpus Christi

Gospel Reflection: Sunday 22/01/23 is the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Word of God Sunday) and the Gospel reading is Mt 4:12-23 or 4:12-17. The text of the reading is below. The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion. The following questions may be helpful: What does this mean to me? How does it make me feel? Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing? What images of God emerge for me? What do I think that God is saying in this text? What impact does this have on my life?

GOSPEL READING

Reader: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Response: Glory to you, O Lord.

Hearing that John had been arrested, Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled:

'Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!

Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan,

Galilee of the nations!

The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light;

on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death

a light has dawned.'

From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast in the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' And they left their nets at once and followed him. Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. At once, leaving the boat and their father, they followed him.



He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.