

SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Dear Friends,

The Holy Eucharist is the Sacrament of Sacraments. It is the source and summit of our Catholic life. All other sacraments, as well as all the ministries and works of the Church, are bound up with the Eucharist and oriented to it. The Eucharist is the crux, the core of our Catholic faith, because the Eucharist is the REAL Presence of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Bread and wine are the heart of the Eucharistic Celebration. In the Old Covenant, bread and wine were offered in sacrifice among the **first fruits** of the earth as a grateful acknowledgment to our Creator. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as “The First Fruits.” The first and the best of the best that is offered. This same theme as first fruits continue in the Offertory Prayer, wherein the Priest prays, “Give thanks to the Creator for bread and wine, fruit of the work of human hands” thereby offering a connection between humanity (work of human hands) and divinity (Jesus as the ‘First Fruits’). When we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ, we have a “Holy Union” with Jesus and form a single body; com (means with) and union (together).



Consecration of the bread and wine becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ when the Priest places his hands over the bread and wine and invokes the Holy Spirit through prayer. In that moment the bread and wine are instantly and fully transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This action is called Transubstantiation, because the *whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained*. (Catechism 1374)

The “Sacrifice of the Mass” continues to be offered over 2000 years later, because Jesus, at the Last Supper commanded His Apostles to do so. This command is confirmed in the 1st Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, (11:23-26) “I received from the Lord what I also handed onto you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and after he gave thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body that 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 death of the Lord until he comes.” This verbiage is exactly what the Priest prays at every Mass.

In addition to referring to the Sacrament as Holy Communion, the vast richness of this sacrament is also expressed in the different names we give it. Each name evokes certain aspects of this Sacrament: **Eucharist:** It is an action of “Thanksgiving.” In Greek the *eucharistia* recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim, especially during a meal, God’s works of creation, redemption, and sanctification.

The Lord’s Supper: Is a connection with the supper of bread and wine the Lord had with His Apostles on the eve of His Passion. Jesus broke the bread, gave thanks to the

Father, thereby instantly becoming His Body and offered it to His Apostles. Next, Jesus poured the wine, gave thanks to the Father thereby becoming His Precious Blood and offered the chalice to the Apostles. Exactly what the priest does at every Mass.

The Breaking of the Bread: Part of a Jewish meal is when the master of the table blessed, broke and distributed the bread. At the Eucharistic table, the priest blesses the bread and wine before consecration, then breaks the Host, and distributes to all signifying that all who eat the broken bread, Christ, enters into communion with Him and form one body in Him.

The Liturgy is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving directed to the Father and is possible only through Christ. That is why, immediately before we stand to pray the Our Father, the Priest elevates the Body and Blood of Christ and says: **Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, forever and ever.**

The primary reason the priest elevates the Body and Blood of Christ is for US to worship and adore Our Lord. Please, please look up at the Priest, when he elevates the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, so that you may praise, worship, and glorify Jesus.

The command to eat the body of Jesus and drink His blood is clearly defined in the Gospel of St. John (6:53 –56): “Amen, Amen I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.” The quotes of Jesus throughout Scripture are always methodological, focused and deliberate. Jesus said what He meant and meant what He said especially when the quote is prefaced with two “Amen, Amen I say to you...” indicating to the Reader to listen up, this is very important.

Therefore, I pose this question to each of you: Do you believe the Eucharist is the true flesh and blood of Jesus? When you receive the Body of Christ, the Priest or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, elevates the Host saying, “Body of Christ” you respond “Amen,” which means “so be it.” It is important you say Amen, because you are concurring that what you are receiving is truly the flesh of Jesus. You will also use the same response for the Blood of Christ concurring it is truly the Precious Blood of Christ. Remember, both the Body and the Blood are Eucharist EVEN if you only receive the Precious Blood.

If you truly believe in the Real Presence of Christ, would it not instill in you awe and reverence for who you are about to receive? As a former Minister of Holy Communion, I have seen Catholics approach me with humility, awe and reverence and I was struck by their demeanor. Unfortunately, I also observed people who received nonchalantly, completely oblivious to what and whom they are receiving. It is our belief of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist that makes us Catholic, since it is only the Catholic Church that offers the Real Presence of Christ in Holy Communion. The Protestant Churches offer Communion; however, it is not the Real Presence of Jesus since the Protestant Minister does not have a direct and unbroken lineage to Christ via the Apostles. The Catholic Church’s unbroken lineage from Jesus to St. Peter to Pope Leo to Bishops to Parish Priests has been intact for over 2,000 years. No other Church can say the same.

Before receiving Holy Communion, do not forget to avail yourselves to the Sacrament of Confession, if you have committed a mortal sin or monthly for venial sins. Last month you read about the awesome benefits of the Sacrament of Confession, and I offer you a gentle reminder, because sometimes Catholics forget that their souls need to be pure for Jesus to enter under their roof.

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