

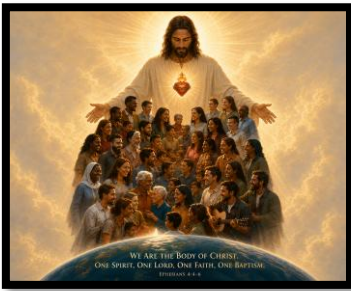
October Day of Recollection – Reflections

Becoming What We Receive: A Eucharistic Journey Across 150 Years

As we celebrate 150 years of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart in America, we are invited to look beyond history to discover a deeper pattern. From the Scriptures to Francis and Clare, from the first sisters who crossed the Atlantic to our own day, the Eucharist has shaped a way of seeing, loving, and living. The story is not simply about the past; it is about how Christ continues to form one Body for the life of the world.

I. Sacred Scriptures on the Eucharist: God's Gift to the World

Our roots date back even further. In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:23–26), we hear the first written account of the Last Supper in scripture



For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given 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.

We reflect that the Eucharist is received and handed on. It is rooted in Jesus' self-gift; *"This is my body... this is my blood"*. We participate in Christ's self-offering until He comes again. The Eucharist is made present and lived through you and me.

Paul writes: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20)

For Paul, the Body of Christ is not simply a metaphor for the Church. Through Baptism and the Eucharist, believers are drawn into the risen Christ.

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27).

The Eucharist does not merely remind us of Jesus; it forms us into Christ's Body.

II. Francis: Wonder Before the Humility of God

Francis' first Admonition on ***The Body of the Lord***

" *The Lord Jesus says to his disciples: I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; and from now on you shall know him and have seen him. Philip says to him: Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us. Jesus says to him: Am I with you so long a time, and still you do not know me? Philip, he who sees me sees my Father also* (John 14, 6-9).

The Father *dwells in unapproachable light* (1Tim 6,16) and *God is spirit* (John 4,24) and *no one has ever seen God* (John 1,18). Hence only in spirit can he be seen, *for it is the spirit that gives life; the flesh has nothing to offer* (John 6,63). Yet neither is the Son, in as much as he is equal to the Father, seen by any one other than by the Father, other than by the Holy Spirit. Wherefore, all those who saw the Lord Jesus according to humanity and did not see and believe according to the spirit and the divinity that he is the true Son of God, were condemned. So also, now all those who behold the sacrament which is sanctified by the words of the Lord upon the altar at the hand of the priest in the form of bread and wine, and do not see and believe according to the spirit and divinity that it is truly the most holy body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, are condemned.

This the Most High Himself attests, who says: *This is my body and the blood of my New Testament* (Mk 14,22-24) and: *who feeds on my Flesh and drinks my Blood will have everlasting life* (John 6,55). Wherefore the spirit of the Lord, who dwells in his faithful ones, He it is who receives the most holy body and blood of the Lord. All others who do not share that spirit and presume to receive him eat and drink *judgment to themselves* (1Cor 11,29).

Wherefore, *O you sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart?* (Ps 4,3). Why do you not recognize the truth and believe *in the Son of God* (Jo 9,35)? Behold: daily he humbles himself (Phil 2,8) as when *from heaven's royal throne* (Wisdom 18,15) he came down into the womb of the Virgin. Daily he himself comes to us with humility; daily he descends from the bosom of the Father (John 1,18; 6,38) upon the altar in the hands of the priest. And as he appeared to the Apostles in true flesh, so now also he shows himself to us in the sacred bread. And as they by their bodily sight saw only his flesh yet contemplating him with the eyes of the spirit believed him to be very God, so we also, as we see our bodily eyes the bread and wine, are to see and firmly believe that it is his most holy body and blood living and true. And in this way the Lord is always with his faithful, as he himself says: *Behold I am with you until the end of the world* (Mt 28,20)."

Francis brings us to the heart of Eucharistic faith:

- Those who saw Jesus only in his humanity and did not perceive his divinity missed the truth
- So too, those who see only bread and wine and do not perceive Christ through the Spirit fail to recognize him

Francis writes that: God, who is Spirit, must be seen through the Spirit. The Eucharist requires the eyes to see with Faith and a heart that is open to mystery. We see bread and wine and are invited to believe more deeply. Francis teaches us to recognize the astonishing gift of God's presence.

He reminds us with profound simplicity: Just as Christ came humbly into the womb of Mary through the Incarnation, so he comes humbly to us each day upon the altar. In this Eucharistic encounter, we receive Christ's self-giving love and are drawn into communion, becoming a people who live that same self-gift for the life of the world.



III. Clare: Becoming What We Receive

Ilia Delio has captured the heart of Clare's eucharistic spirituality in Chapter 7 of *Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love*. Clare's hours in adoration before the San Damiano Crucifix taught her to know and to love her God. When in danger, she went straight to Christ in the Eucharist and asked his protection, for example when the Saracens attempted to attack the monastery. She was also willing to lay down her life for her sisters and the citizens of Assisi. Clare's time with God always led her to give herself for others. Just as with Francis, the humility of God gives us God's presence with us in a piece of bread and in the act of foot washing. We adore, we receive, we become. We become Christ for one another in all our acts of love.



1. The Eucharist Reveals God's Self-Giving Love - pp 80-82;

The Eucharist is the fullest expression of God's love poured out in Christ. It continues the mystery of the Incarnation and the Cross, revealing a God who chooses vulnerability, humility, and communion rather than power. For Clare, the Eucharist is the enduring sign that God remains intimately present with humanity. God continually gives God's very self.

2. The Eucharist Forms the Body of Christ - pp 82-84

Drawing heavily on **Pauline theology**, Delio emphasizes that the Eucharist creates a community. Through sharing the one Bread, we become the Body of Christ. Communion is therefore not simply a personal devotion but participation in Christ's living presence in the world. The key is that we become what we receive.

3. Contemplation Leads to Transformation - pp 84-87

Clare's spirituality is profoundly contemplative. Her invitation to Agnes—"*Gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, imitate Him*"—describes a movement of the heart. The purpose of contemplation is not simply deeper prayer but transformation into Christ. For Delio, the Eucharist is where contemplation and discipleship meet. To behold Christ is gradually to become Christ.

4. Eucharistic Living Means Self-Giving Love - 87-90

The Eucharist is not confined to the liturgy. It becomes a pattern for daily life. Clare understood that receiving Christ calls one to live Christ's self-emptying (*kenosis*) through humility, poverty, forgiveness, service, and compassion. The Eucharist is a way of life, not merely an act of worship.

5. The Eucharist Gives Hope for the Future - 90-93

The Eucharist is both remembrance and promise. It unites believers with the risen Christ, who continues to gather humanity into one Body. Delio sees this as an ongoing movement of God's creative love, inviting the Church to participate in Christ's continuing mission of reconciliation and new creation. For Clare, this hope gave courage in uncertainty and faithfulness in suffering. Here the Eucharist sends us into the future as Christ's living presence.

IV. The Founding Sisters: Bread Broken and Shared

The same Eucharistic spirit that shaped Francis, Clare, Fr. Berger and the Sisters who established roots in Germany also inspired 27 Sisters to leave their homeland and journey to America 150 years ago. They crossed the Atlantic carrying few material possessions, yet they brought with them treasures that could not be packed in a trunk: hope rooted in God's providence, faith that trusted an unknown future, lives sustained by prayer, the Franciscan charism taught them by Fr. Berger, and a deep commitment to works of neighborly love.

The Eucharist celebrated over the past 150 years became the life lived. In classrooms, homes, hospitals, and parishes, they embodied Christ's self-giving love, becoming bread blessed, broken, and shared for others. Their legacy is found not only in the ministries they established, but in the Eucharistic way of life they entrusted to future generations, a living charism that continues to nourish the Church, our world and all creation.

V. 150 Years Later

Today, 150 years later, we find ourselves in a different chapter of the same story. The world has changed, the needs of society have changed, and the ways we live the Gospel continue to evolve. Yet beneath these changes lies a deeper continuity. It is the same Spirit who first inspired Francis and Clare. It is the same Gospel that called the founding sisters across the ocean. It is the same Eucharist that gathers us into the Body of Christ and sends us forth in love.

While the outward expressions of mission may differ from one generation to another, the heart of our vocation remains unchanged: to become what we receive, living Christ's self-giving love for the life of the world. The story of these 150 years is not simply one of remembering the past, but of recognizing that Christ continues to shape a living people, inviting each generation to carry the gift of the Eucharist into the future with hope.

VI. Today

Discuss what Eucharist means to you today. Share meaningful insights from the readings on Eucharist from Scripture, Francis's Admonition, Ilia Delio's writings on Clare and our heritage.



Songs Suggestions for closing:

[So longs my soul](#) ... Into the Quiet. Liam Lawton

[Strength for the Journey](#) . . . Sung by Michael John Poirier