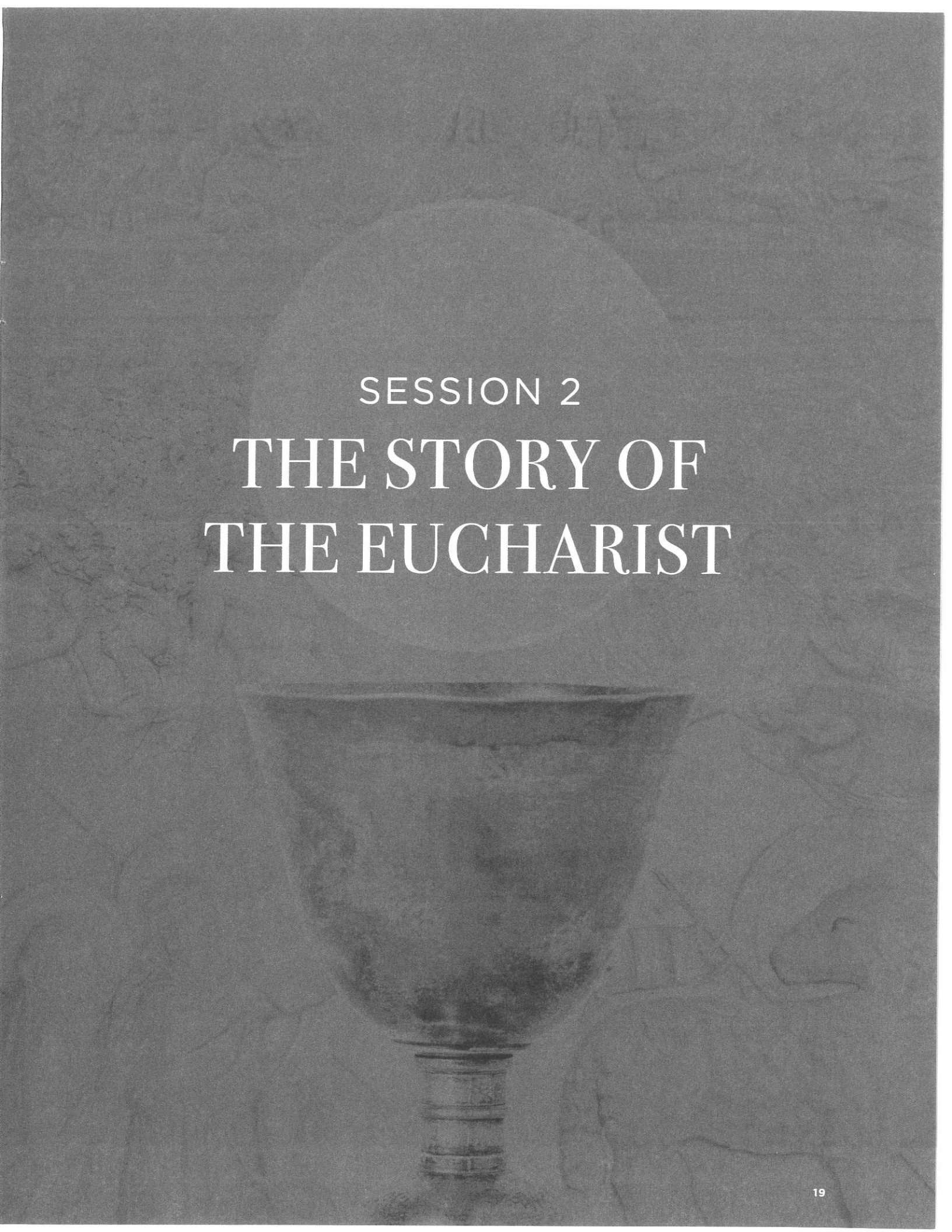




SESSION 2

THE STORY OF THE EUCHARIST

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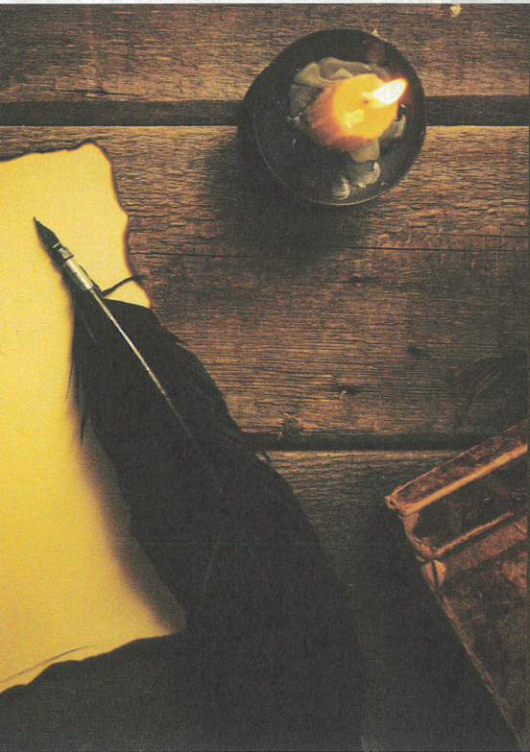


OPENING PRAYER

The Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds conceal me.
Do not permit me to be parted from you.
From the evil foe protect me.
At the hour of my death call me.
And bid me come to you,
to praise you with all your saints
for ever and ever.
Amen.

—Saint Francis de Sales



INTRODUCTION

Stories are powerful. They speak not only to our minds, but also to our hearts. A good story sticks with us long after we have heard it and continues to teach and inspire us.

God is the Master Storyteller. He authors his great love story not only with words, but with deeds. All of God's mighty deeds throughout history make up one beautiful narrative of salvation, which culminates in the Paschal Mystery. Jesus's teachings and actions throughout his ministry prepare for the moment he offers himself for, and to, each of us, fulfilling his promise that "My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John 6:55).

"It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do so without the Holy Mass."

—Saint Pio of Pietrelcina



CONNECT

What was your favorite story as a child? Why?

How would you answer this question: "Where does belief in the Eucharist come from?"



DIGGING DEEPER

THE EUCHARIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Many of Jesus's followers found his teaching on the Eucharist hard to accept. As strange as the command to eat his flesh and drink his blood may have sounded, it did not come out of the blue. The gift of the Eucharist is prefigured in many ways throughout the Old Testament.

At the very beginning of creation, Scripture reveals that mankind was created for intimate communion with God and was destined for eternal life. This reality is revealed in the context of a meal—Adam and Eve's access to the fruit of the Tree of Life that was in the center of the Garden of Eden. (see Genesis 2:9, 3:22). As a result of Adam and Eve's Original Sin, they are exiled from the Garden. No longer able to walk with God in garden or to have access to the Tree of Life and its fruit, Adam and Eve find they have lost communion and eternal life with God (see Genesis 3). Through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, the Cross becomes the New Tree of Life once again offering all communion with God and eternal life, and it is the Eucharist that becomes its fruit.

Melchizedek, king of Salem (later renamed Jerusalem) and the "priest of God Most High," offers a sacrifice of bread and wine in thanksgiving for Abram's victory over his enemies (see Genesis 14:18–20). Jesus, the "King of kings" (Revelation 19:16) and "great high priest" (Hebrews 4:14),

continued next page



DIGGING DEEPER *continued*

changes bread and wine into his Body and Blood at Jerusalem and offers them as the perfect sacrifice to the Father (see Hebrews 10:1-18).

To save the Israelites from slavery and death in Egypt, God institutes the feast of Passover (see Exodus 12). This feast requires the sacrifice of a lamb without blemish and participation in a meal including the lamb and unleavened bread. By the blood of the lamb spread on the wood of the lintels and doorposts of their homes and the flesh of the lamb consumed in the meal, the Israelites are saved from the angel of death and brought out of slavery. Jesus, the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), sheds his blood on the wood of the Cross and gives us his Flesh to eat in the Eucharist. By his sacrifice and our participation in this sacramental meal, we are saved from spiritual death and brought out of slavery to sin.



To sustain his people in the wilderness, God provides manna (see Exodus 16). This miraculous bread from Heaven falls for forty years without fail, and ceases only when Israel has crossed over into the Promised Land. Jesus is the new Bread from Heaven, sustaining us with the food of his Body and Blood in the Eucharist while we journey toward the Promised Land of Heaven (see John 6:32-58).

THE EUCHARIST IN THE TEACHING AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

Through his miracles and his teaching, Jesus prepares his followers for the Eucharist even before he institutes the sacrament at the Last Supper.

Jesus’s very first miracle, changing water into wine at the Wedding Feast of Cana (see John 2:1-12), points forward to the greater miracle of changing wine into his Precious Blood at the Last Supper.

On more than one occasion, Jesus multiplies loaves of bread to feed vast multitudes of people (see Matthew 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Mark 6:30-43; 8:1-10; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14). This miraculous provision of natural food points forward to the provision of his own Body as food for the whole world through the Eucharist.

In the Bread of Life discourse, Jesus tells his followers explicitly that he will provide his own Flesh and Blood as true food and true drink and that this supernatural food will give us eternal life (see John 6:22-71).

At the Last Supper, Jesus fulfills all the foreshadowings of the Old Testament and his own ministry when he turns bread and wine into his Body and Blood and gives them to the Apostles (see Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20). He tells his Apostles, “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). This meaning this miracle is not to be a one-time gift, but rather a sacrament to be continued for all ages. We know that the Apostles understand and obey this command because Saint Paul—who is not one of the Twelve at the Last Supper—continues to pass on this exact teaching almost twenty years later (see 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

It is the Eucharist that strengthens us to follow the instructions Jesus gives at the Last Supper: to love one another, to obey his commandments, and to abide in his love (see John 13-17).



I. John 6—Bread of Life Discourse

- A.** Jesus's explicit teaching on the Eucharist
- B.** Many followers leave Jesus over this teaching
- C.** This teaching is so central to his mission that he lets them go

II. The Story of Scripture

- A.** God's plan is for Adam and Eve to become one with him by eating from the Tree of Life
- B.** Adam and Eve sever their communion with God through a meal
- C.** When Adam and Eve sin, they turn away from the presence of God
- D.** God promises a savior to overcome the obstacle of sin
- E.** The whole Old Testament leads up to the sacrifice of the Cross

III. Passover

- A.** Preparation for the tenth plague of the Exodus
- B.** A sacrifice and a meal that inaugurated a rescue mission
- C.** Celebrated every year to make present God's saving work in history and look forward to his ultimate salvation yet to come
- D.** John 6 takes place during the Passover feast

IV. The Last Supper

- A.** Jesus uses the traditional Passover meal to institute the Eucharist
- B.** Applies sacrificial language to himself—he is the new Passover Lamb
- C.** We participate in his sacrifice by receiving his Body and Blood in the Eucharist

V. Road to Emmaus

- A.** First day of the week—new creation
 - 1. A test in a garden
 - 2. Jesus is the New Adam
 - 3. The Cross is the new Tree of Life, and the Eucharist is its fruit
- B.** When we partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life, our eyes are opened to behold God



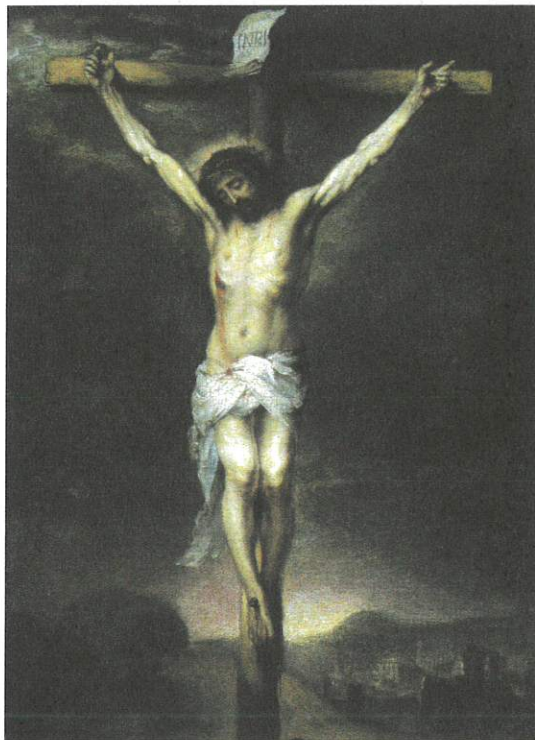
DIGGING DEEPER

SACRIFICIAL MEMORIAL

"The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice, in the liturgy of the Church which is his Body" (CCC 1362).

When Jesus instructs his Apostles to celebrate the Eucharist "in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19), he is telling them to celebrate a memorial (*anamnesis* in Greek), which has a very specific meaning for the Jews. In Scripture, a memorial does not merely call to mind what God has done in the past, but in proclaiming the mighty works of God the memorial makes them present again in a certain way. For this reason the Passover memorial is observed not just to remember what God did for one generation of Israelites, but to acknowledge and acclaim that his salvation is for the current generation as well.

Every time the Mass is celebrated, it really and truly makes present Jesus's sacrifice at Calvary. The once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross is made present to us again, so that we may participate in it and be transformed and saved by it. With the whole Church, each of us is united to Christ in his one sacrifice so that we, too, may make a perfect offering to the Father.





DISCUSS

1. What was one thing from the video that you heard for the first time or that was an “aha” moment for you?

2. What are some of the connections between Passover and the Eucharist? What does this teach us about the Eucharist?

3. In the celebration of the Mass, how do we participate in offering the perfect sacrifice of Christ?

4. In what ways is the Eucharist the fruit of the Tree of Life? What implications does this have for your own life?

“The soul hungers for God, and nothing but God can satiate it. Therefore He came to dwell on earth and assumed a Body in order that this Body might become the Food of our souls.”

— Saint John Vianney



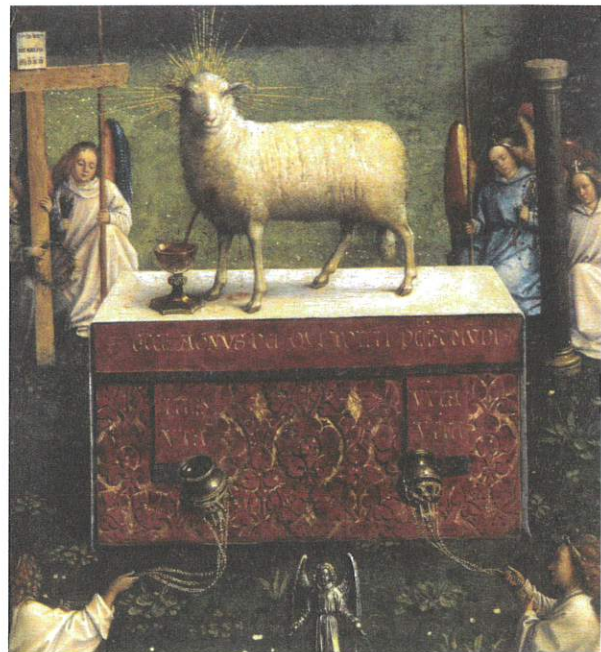
Why do you receive the Eucharist? What do you hope for or expect this sacrament to accomplish in you?

Read John’s vision of the Tree of Life in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ... The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let him who hears say, “Come.” And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.”

—Revelation 22:1–5, 14, 17



What stands out to you in this passage?

Consider the fruits of the Eucharist, listed in the Digging Deeper section. With which fruit(s) are you most familiar? Which one do you feel you need the most at this time in your life? Spend some time in prayer, asking our Lord especially for this fruit the next time you receive the Eucharist.



DIGGING DEEPER

FRUITS OF THE EUCHARIST (CCC 1391-1397)

What does the Eucharist do for us?

It draws us closer to Christ. It is called “communion” because it brings us into an intimate union with our Lord.

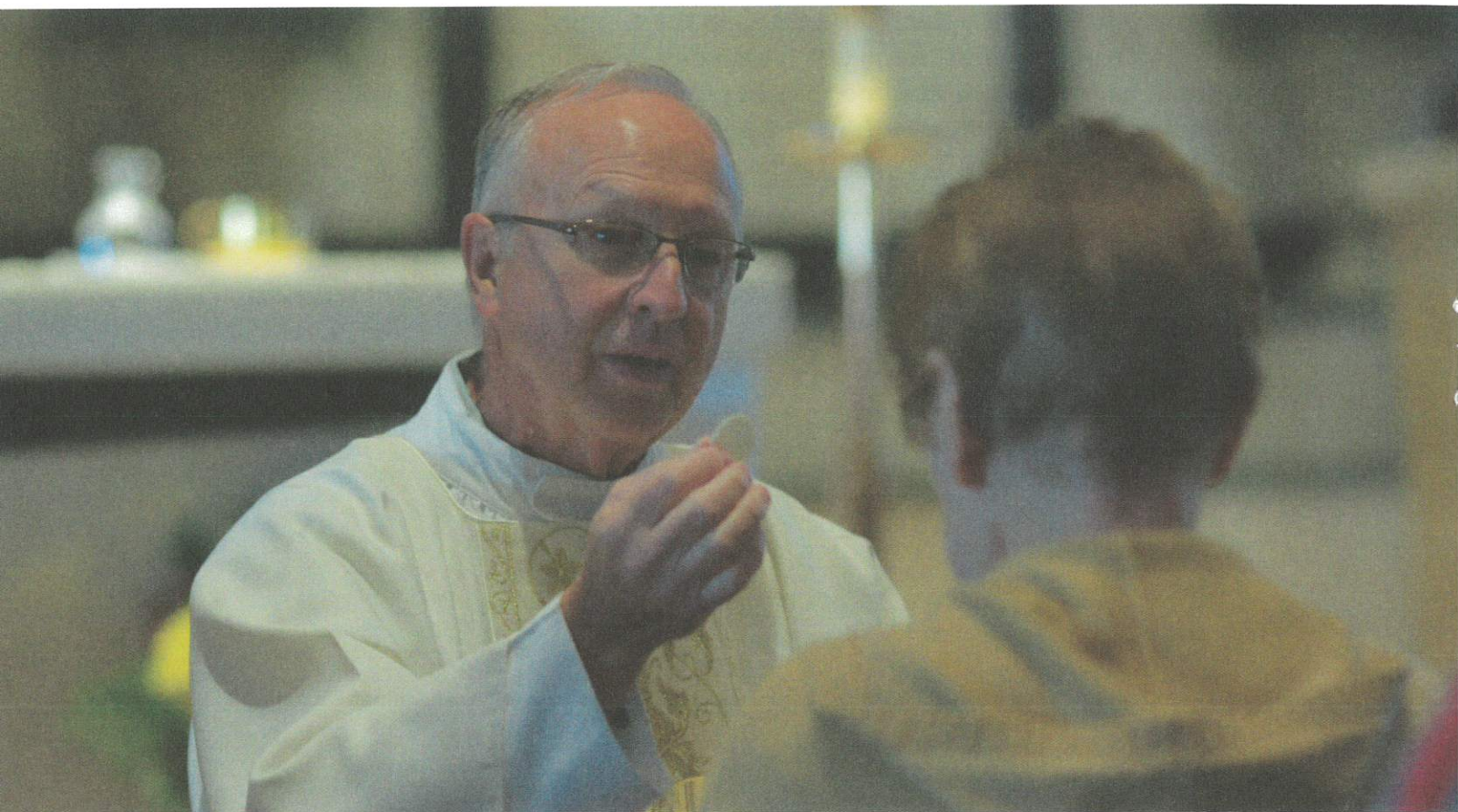
It nourishes and replenishes the life of grace we received in Baptism, just as regular food nourishes our physical life.

It cleanses us from past sins and helps us to avoid sin in the future.

It strengthens us in love.

It unites us more closely to the Church, the Body of Christ.

It helps us to see Christ in the poor and to care for them.



WRAP-UP and CLOSING PRAYER

O saving Victim, opening wide.
The gate of heaven to man below:
Our foes press on from every side;
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.

To Thy great Name be endless praise,
immortal Godhead, One in Three!
O grant us endless length of days
In our true native land with Thee.
Amen.

—from *Verbum Supernum* by Saint Thomas Aquinas

“Lord Jesus Christ, pierce my soul with your love so that I may always long for you alone, who are the bread of angels and the fulfillment of the soul’s deepest desires. May my heart always hunger for you, so that my soul may be filled with the sweetness of your presence.”

—Saint Bonaventure

“The Sacrament of the Body of the Lord puts the demons to flight, defends us against the incentives to vice and to concupiscence, cleanses the soul from sin, quiets the anger of God, enlightens the understanding to know God, inflames the will and the affections with the love of God, fills the memory with spiritual sweetness, confirms the entire man in good, frees us from eternal death, multiplies the merits of a good life, leads us to our everlasting home, and re-animates the body to eternal life.”

—Saint Thomas Aquinas

FOR FURTHER READING

Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (Image: 2016)

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1333–44 (“The Eucharist in the Economy of Salvation”), 1362–72 (“The sacrificial memorial of Christ and of his Body, the Church”), 1391–1401 (“The fruits of Holy Communion”)

Pope St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist in its Relationship to the Church (2003)

Tim Gray, *Sacraments in Scripture: Salvation History Made Present*, Chapter 1 “Sacraments in Scripture” and Chapter 4 “Sacrament of the Eucharist” (Emmaus Road: 2001)

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