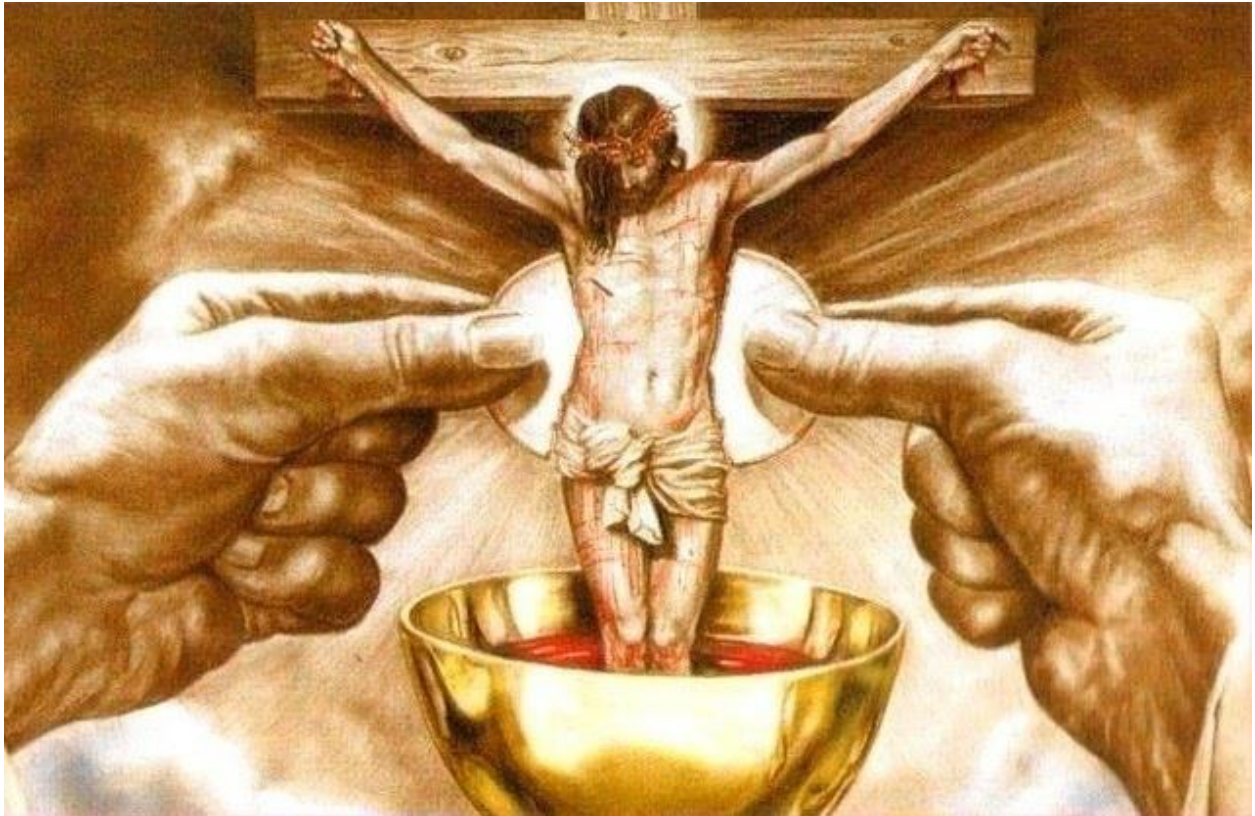


Lesson 17

Eucharist



Two concepts come together in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: the name of Jesus and body. In many ways, those two concepts encompass our Eucharistic doctrine in a nutshell. We gather in Jesus' name, at his command, to remember his Passion, Death and Resurrection (*the Paschal Mystery*) and to become one with him when we receive his body. This is a core belief of Catholic faith, but it's often one of the most misunderstood. The bread and wine that are consecrated become Christ's Body and Blood. It's not something figurative or symbolic. The bread and wine really are changed into Jesus himself; this is why the Church acknowledges the "Real Presence" of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The Church uses philosophy to explain the change, teaching that things are made up of "substance" and "accidents." "Substance" is a thing in its essence and "accidents" are what we can sense to describe the thing. For example, consider a desk. Desks come in all different shapes, sizes and colors. They are made of different materials and for different purposes. But there is something universal about a desk that makes it a desk, something we can call "deskness." Along those lines, a desk cannot be a car; just like an envelope cannot be a pen.

With the bread and wine that are changed into Jesus at Mass, the accidents — all the characteristics that manifest the thing to our senses (*like the texture of the bread and the taste of the wine*) remain the same. They are not changed. What is changed is the substance. The “breadness” and the “wineness” are changed into Jesus himself, into his very Body, by the power of God.

The ripples of transformation that come from this work of the Holy Spirit are boundless. Not only are the bread and wine changed, but we can be, too. We are members of Jesus’ Body from baptism, and we renew and strengthen this bond each time we receive the Eucharist. This affects not only our relationship with Jesus, but with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The Eucharist makes the Church by building up the Body of Christ.

Our belief in the Real Presence best can be shared with others when we live and teach these realities. For the Faith to take root in hearts of others, we must live as we believe and practice as we teach.

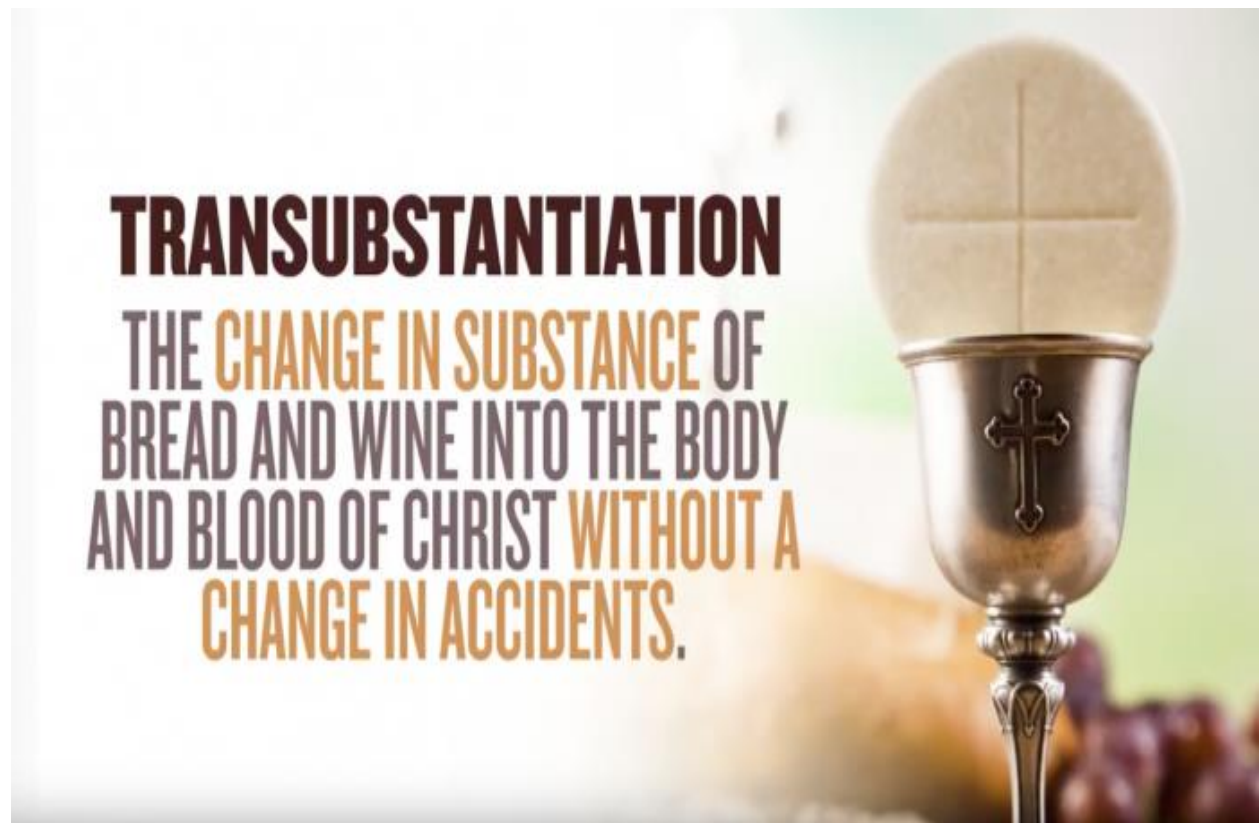


The Eucharist is one of the three Sacraments of Initiation. The Eucharist can be received by the laity (*the people of God*) once per day. The Eucharist is called the “Sacrament of Sacraments” because we receive the greatest gift that God the Father has to offer the world: the gift of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. The best description of the Sacrament of the Eucharist is: the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. When we receive the Eucharist, we receive Christ Himself. Because the Eucharist is the “Real Presence” of Jesus Christ, it is called the “Bread of Life.” In the Eucharist, we receive the Bread of Eternal Life: the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. When we receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist, we take Christ into our body and, at the same time, Christ takes us into his Body. Hence the Eucharist unites us all together as the living Body of Christ on earth. Therefore, the Eucharist is correctly referred to as the “Sacrament of Unity.”

The Sacrament of Eucharist produces the following effects:

1. The Sacrament increases our union with Christ.
2. The Eucharist separates us from sin and keeps us from future mortal sin.
3. The Sacrament takes away venial sins.
4. The Eucharist unites us to the Church (*the living Body of Christ*).
5. The Sacrament decreases purgatorial debt (*our time in Purgatory*).
6. The Eucharist helps us care for the poor.

The Signs of the Sacrament of Eucharist are: the bread and the wine. These elements become the Body and Blood of Christ through the priest's prayers of consecration. The process of the changing of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is called "Transubstantiation." In the Eucharist, the Word of God (*Jesus Christ*) is present yet it takes the eyes of faith to see (*recognize*) him. The Eucharist is distributed during Mass where we are called to gather around the table of the Lord (*like at the Last Supper*) and share in the breaking of the Bread of Life (*Jesus Christ*).



The word "Eucharist" means "Thanksgiving." The Eucharist is the sign of the eternal covenant with God; it is a sign of our redemption and salvation. The Sacrament of Sacraments calls us to give thanks to God the Father for the great gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. The more we receive the Sacrament of Eucharist the more we are able to become like Christ, whom we consume. Therefore, the Eucharist gives us identity. Through the Eucharist, we are "putting on Christ" (*as St. Paul would say*). The Eucharist allows us to grow in our true identity as children of God.

Jesus' miracles of the multiplication of the loaves are a foreshadowing of the Eucharist. In each account, Jesus takes the bread, then he performs three specific actions: he blesses it, he breaks it, and he shares it. Since we are called to be Eucharistic people, we must be like the Eucharistic Bread: we must be Blessed, Broken, and Shared. The Multiplication Miracles are found in all four Gospels.



How to Properly Receive the Sacrament of the Eucharistic

Please Note: You are to eat no food nor drink any beverage at least one full hour before you receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This is known as the "Eucharistic Fast."

1. While in the Communion line and the person in front of you is receiving the Eucharist, make a slight bow.
2. Step forward with your hands held out (*your left hand on top of your right hand with both palms facing up*).



3. The priest (*or Eucharistic Minister*) will hold up the Sacrament and say, "The Body of Christ." You respond, "Amen," while the host is placed into your hands. Do not take the host from the priest, but rather allow him to place it in your hand.
4. Take one step to the side and take the host with your right hand and place it in your mouth. Make the sign of the cross.

If you are receiving the Precious Blood, then continue as follows (if not, then return to your pew):

5. While in the Communion line for the Precious Blood, make a slight bow while the person in front of you is receiving from the chalice.
6. Step forward and the Eucharistic Minister will hold up the chalice and say, "The Blood of Christ." You respond, "Amen."
7. Take the chalice and take a small sip of the Precious Blood.
8. Hand the chalice back to the Eucharistic Minister and return to your pew.

Questions about the Eucharist

The Definition of the Sacrament of Eucharist

Catholics believe the Eucharist, or Communion, is both a sacrifice and a meal. We believe in the Real Presence of Jesus, who died for our sins. As we receive Christ's Body and Blood, we also are nourished spiritually and brought closer to God.

What is the Eucharist?

The Eucharist is the very sacrifice of the Body and Blood of 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.

When did Jesus Christ institute the Eucharist?

Jesus instituted the Eucharist on Holy Thursday, as he celebrated the Last Supper with his apostles.

How did Jesus institute the Eucharist?

After Jesus had gathered with his apostles, he 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".

What does the Eucharist represent in the life of the Church?

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. The Eucharist contains the whole spiritual good of the Church, Christ himself. Communion with Divine Life and the unity of the People of God are both expressed and effected by the Eucharist. Through the Eucharistic Celebration of the Mass we are united already with the liturgy of heaven and we have a foretaste of eternal life.

Where does the Eucharist fit in the Divine plan of salvation?

The Eucharist was foreshadowed in the Old Testament in the annual Passover meal celebrated by the Jews with unleavened bread to commemorate their exodus from slavery in Egypt. Jesus foretold it in his teaching and he instituted it when he celebrated the Last Supper with his apostles. 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.

How is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist carried out?

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 of consecration, and communion.



In what way is the Eucharist a memorial of the sacrifice of Christ?

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.

How is Christ present in the Eucharist?

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.

Does the breaking of the bread divide Christ?

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.

How long does the presence of Christ last in the Eucharist?

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

When does the Church oblige her members to participate at Holy Mass?

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.



When must one receive Holy Communion?

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.

What is required to receive Holy Communion?

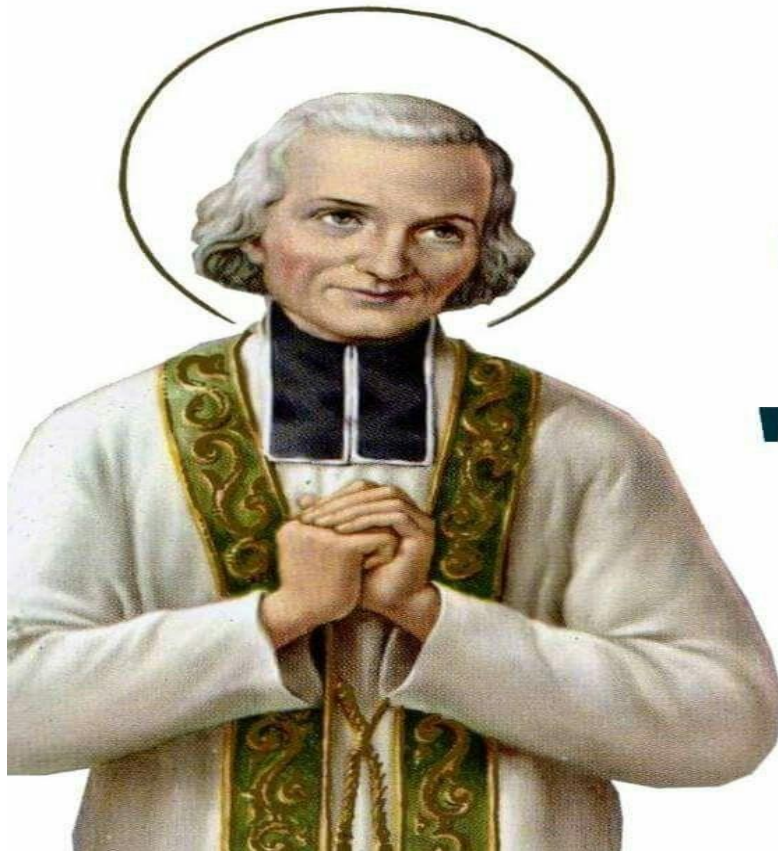
To receive Holy Communion one must be fully incorporated into the Catholic Church and be in the state of grace, that is, not conscious of being in mortal sin. Anyone who is conscious of having committed a grave sin must first receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before going to Communion. Also important 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.

What are the fruits of Holy Communion?

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.

Why is the Eucharist a “pledge of future glory”?

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.



**"EVERY
CONSECRATED
HOST IS MADE TO
BURN ITSELF
UP WITH
'LOVE'
IN A
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St. Jean Vianney
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