

## **Eucharist**

The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. This sacrament, which is “the source and summit of the Christian life,” was instituted on the first Holy Thursday.

“At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until He should come again.”

Being present at the Eucharistic sacrifice has the same value as being present at the foot of the cross when Jesus died for our sins, for it is, indeed, the memorial of the Lord’s Passion and Resurrection.

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### **Terminology**

The **Holy Eucharist** is a sacrament and a sacrifice. In the Holy Eucharist, the Lord Jesus Christ is contained (Body, Blood, soul and divinity), offered and received.

The word **Eucharist** comes from the Greek words *eucharistein* and *eulogein* which recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim – especially during a meal – God’s works of creation, redemption and sanctification.

**Holy Communion** is the receiving of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Communion is the action by which all of us eat together the Flesh and Blood of Christ as the food and drink of our souls.

### **Role of Eucharist in salvation**

The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” The sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ Himself.

### **Institution of the Eucharist**

The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist was instituted at the Last Supper, the night before He died in the presence of his apostles.

He took bread, blessed and broke it, and giving it to His apostles said: “Take and eat, this is My Body”; then He took a cup of wine, blessed it, and giving it to them, said: “All of you drink of this; for this is My Blood of the new covenant which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins”; finally, He gave His apostles the commission: “Do this in remembrance of Me.”

By doing this, He gave power to the priests to perform the miracle of changing bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord.

### **Transubstantiation**

When the priest says, “This is My Body”, the bread is changed into the Body of the Lord.  
When the priest says, “This is My Blood”, the wine is changed into the Blood of the Lord.  
Only the appearances of bread and wine remain.

The changing of one substance into another without changing in appearance is called ***transubstantiation***.

By ***appearances of bread and wine*** we mean that their color, taste, weight, shape and whatever else appears to the senses.

The reason that God preserves the appearances of bread and wine in the Eucharist is to enable us to eat the Flesh and drink the Blood of Christ without difficulty.

**What is necessary to receive Holy Communion worthily?**

Be free of mortal sin. To receive Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin is a grave sin of sacrilege.

To have a right intention (be mindful of the truth about what is to take place in Holy Communion).

To obey the Church's laws on the fast required out of reverence for the Body and Blood of Our Divine Lord. [Holy Communion may be received without fasting when one is in danger of death or when it is necessary to save the Blessed Sacrament from insult or injury.]

**What are the Church's laws regarding fasting before receiving Holy Communion?**

- 1) Whoever is to receive the Blessed Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before Holy Communion from all food and drink, with the sole exception of water and medicine.
- 2) A priest who, on the same day, celebrates the Blessed Eucharist twice or three times may consume something before the second or third celebration, even though there is not an hour's interval.
- 3) The elderly and those who are suffering from some illness, as well as those who care for them, may receive the Blessed Eucharist even if within the preceding hour they have consumed something.

Code of Canon Law, Can. 919

**Can a person receive Holy Communion more than once in a single day?**

One who has received the Blessed Eucharist may receive it again on the same day only within a Eucharistic celebration in which that person participates

Code of Canon Law, Can. 917

**How should we prepare to receive Holy Communion?**

We should think of Our Divine Redeemer whom we are about to receive, and make fervent acts of faith, hope, love and contrition.

**What should we do after receiving Holy Communion?**

We should spend some time adoring Our Lord, thanking Him, renewing our promises of love and of obedience to Him, and asking Him for blessings for ourselves and others.

**The Fruits of Holy Communion**

Holy Communion:

- 1) Preserves, increases and renews the life of grace received at Baptism.
- 2) Brings a closer union with Our Lord and a more fervent love of God and of our neighbor.

- 3) Gives an increase in sanctifying grace.
- 4) Preserves us from mortal sin and brings the remission [wiping away] of venial sin. It actually “separates us from sin” by cleansing us of past sins and preserving us from future sins.
- 5) Lessens of our inclinations to sin and helps us to practice good works.
- 6) Unites all the faithful more closely to Christ and to each other as one Body, the Church.
- 7) Commits us to the poor, since we must recognize Christ in our poorest brethren.
- 8) Commits us to the unity of all Christians. The more painful the experience of the divisions in the Church which break the common participation in the table of the Lord, the more urgent are our prayers to the Lord that the time of complete unity among all who believe in Him may return.

#### **What can we do to receive more abundant graces from Holy Communion?**

Strive to be more fervent – enthusiastic in our devotion, tireless and diligent in our faith.  
Free ourselves of deliberate venial sins which weaken us.

#### **When are we obliged to receive Holy Communion?**

We are obliged to receive Holy Communion during Easter time each year and when in danger of death.

#### **Frequent reception of Holy Communion**

Daily Communion is highly recommended by the Church.

Many people could go to daily Communion, if they really wanted to, but it might cost a the sacrifice of going to bed a little earlier and getting up a little earlier.

#### **How should we show our gratitude to Our Lord for remaining always on our altars in the Holy Eucharist?**

By visiting Him often in the tabernacle, by reverence in church, by assisting every day at Mass, when possible, by attending parish devotions and by being present at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

#### **Holy Communion for the dying**

Christ's faithful who are in danger of death, from whatever cause, are to be strengthened by Holy Communion as Viaticum.

Even if they have already received Holy Communion that same day, it is nevertheless strongly suggested that in danger of death they should communicate again.

While the danger of death persists, it is recommended that Holy Communion be administered a number of times, but on separate days.

Holy Viaticum for the sick is not to be unduly delayed. Those who have the care of souls are to take assiduous care that the sick are strengthened by It while they are in full possession of their faculties.

Code of Canon Law, Can. 921, Can. 922

#### **Communion of our Protestant brothers and sisters**

Communities derived from the Reformation and separated from the Catholic Church “have not preserved the proper reality of the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness, especially because of the absence of the sacrament of Holy Orders.” It is for this reason that Eucharistic intercommunion with these communities is not possible for the Catholic Church.

However, when a grave necessity arises, Catholic ministers may give the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick to a Christian not in full communion with the Catholic Church, who ask for them of their own will, provided that they give evidence of holding the Catholic faith regarding these sacraments and possess the required dispositions.

### **The Real Presence – A Story (Ref. 3)**

#### **“HE IS THERE”**

A little English boy heard that Jesus was present in the holy tabernacle, and that He listened to the prayers of those who went there to speak to Him. One day he went to the church to pray for the conversion of his father. Going into the sanctuary, he climbed upon the altar, and sitting there, near the door of the tabernacle, knocked at it with his little hand saying: “Are you there, Jesus?”

But there was no answer. He knocked again, saying the same words: “Are you there, Jesus? They told me at Sunday-school that you were here.”

He listened for an answer, but still no answer came. “Perhaps the dear Jesus is asleep; I will quietly awake Him”. “O my dear little Jesus,” he said gently, “I believe in Thee and I love Thee; answer me, I beseech Thee.”

Jesus could not refuse to answer the simple and humble prayer of the child, said with so much confidence. A voice came forth from the tabernacle saying: “Yes, My dear child, I am here. My love for you makes Me stay here always. What do you want of Me today, My dear little brother?”

The child answered in a voice broken by sobs: “My father is not a good man; O my Jesus, make him good, and he will serve Thee and love Thee!”

“Go my dearest child; I will grant your prayer.”

The child went home all radiant with joy; Jesus had told him that his prayer would be granted. On the following day his father, of his own accord, went to the church, made a good confession, and became a fervent Christian.

My child, that same Jesus is present on the altar in your own church. He is there because He loves you, and because He desires to bestow on you great graces. Oh, then, when you go into the church, kneel reverently and lovingly before the altar, and say to Him: “My dearest Jesus, I firmly believe that Thou art really present on this altar, and I love Thee with my whole heart.”

### **References**

- 1) Catechism of the Catholic Church**, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, pp. 334-356.
- 2) Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism**, Official Revised Edition, No. 2, Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 1962, pp. 162-167, 177-183.
- 3) Chisholm, Rev. D., The Catechism in Examples, Volume IV, Grace: The Sacraments**, Roman Catholic Books, Ft. Collins, CO, first published in 1919, pp. 108-109.