

FIRST EUCHARIST

Handbook for Parents





OFFICE
OF THE
BISHOP

DIOCESE OF FARGO

5201 Bishops Boulevard, Suite A
Fargo, North Dakota 58104-7605

www.fargodiocese.org

Phone: 701.356.7944

Fax: 701.356.7999

August 2009

Dear Parents,

This parent handbook is provided to you to help you prepare your child for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion.

The Catholic Church has always taught that the task of educating children in the faith is the primary responsibility of parents. The rite of Baptism declares this when the priest says to the parents, "*You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?*" Parents respond "Yes". This parent handbook is designed to help you carry out the "Yes" you professed at your child's Baptism.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of all of the sacraments. All sacraments lead to and flow out of the Eucharist. Jesus Christ gives to us the ultimate gift of His body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. As a parent, your love and devotion for the Mass and Eucharist will become a way of teaching your child by example. In observing you, your child will come to know how much Jesus loves him or her. Jesus hungers for us to receive Him in the Eucharist.

It is God's plan for a child to learn from his or her parents. God chose you to be the parent of your child and He gives you a specific grace to be a good parent. Perhaps you are worried that you do not know enough about our Catholic Faith to teach your child. Jesus tells us in the Gospel, "Be not afraid." Have confidence that He will grant you the grace to learn what you need to know. You can learn together with your child! Start now by using this handbook and praying with your child each day. Remember that learning our faith is a lifelong process: we always can deepen in understanding and in the conversion of our hearts and minds.

I recommend that you use authentic resources for learning about our rich and wonderful faith: the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Be careful with using internet sites, as not all information is accurate or true to what the Catholic Church teaches. If in doubt, ask your pastor or a catechist what they would recommend.

May your love for the Eucharist grow and may your child come to have a deep love for Jesus in Holy Communion.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Samuel Aquila, S.T.L., D.D.
Bishop of Fargo

Table of Contents

<u>Sacraments</u>	<u>Page #</u>
Opening Note to Parents from Bishop Aquila	
Preparation for receiving the Sacraments: The Role of Parents.....	5
Parent Responsibilities for Sacramental Preparation.....	6
What's a Sacrament?	7
Prayers for Third Grade	8
<u>First Eucharist in Third Grade</u>	
An Adult Understanding of the Eucharist & How to Talk to my Child.....	10
Essential Teachings on the Sacrament of the Eucharist.....	11
Three Reasons for Mass	12
<u>Going Deeper: The Catechism of the Catholic Church</u>	
Two Week Reading Assignment for Parents.....	14-35
<u>Activities and Resources</u>	
Talking to your Children: Why do we have to go to Mass.....	37
Parent / Child Sample Discussion Questions – Eucharist.....	39
Learn about Sacred Vestments and Vessels.....	41
Playing St. Simon Says with Mass Responses.....	43
Church Documents on the Eucharist	
the church documents are available online at	
http://www.fargodiocese.org/EducationFormation/Evangelization/Eucharist/1stEucharist.htm	

Preparation for receiving the Sacraments

The Role of Parents

As you begin preparing your child for the sacraments

The Church teaches that parents are the first educators and catechists of their children. This means that parents have both a right and duty to instruct their children in the truths of our faith. God the Father entrusts you with the task of raising your children to know, love and serve Him so they can be happy in this world and the next.

To be true to the demands of the vocation to parenthood, parents should do all they can to learn about the Faith so that they can hand it on to their children.

This workbook is designed to assist you in this task of being an evangelizer and catechist to your children.

Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the privilege and responsibility of evangelizing their children.

CCC 2225

The Essential Role of Parents and Siblings

The initiation of children into the sacramental life of the Church is primarily the responsibility and concern of parents (CIC 890, RC 3). Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. In Baptism, parents accept the responsibility of training their children in the practice of the Faith and to make it *“their constant care.”* As stated in the Rite of Baptism (n. 120), parents are to see that *“the divine life which God gives them [their children] is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in their hearts.”*

Brothers and sisters of the child share in this responsibility of handing on the Faith. Siblings, especially those who have been fully initiated, assist the parents by their good example. This family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches all other catechesis (CT 68).

The entire family is to deliver the Gospel to each other daily in word and deed, filled with love and respect: *“For this reason the family home is rightly called the domestic church, a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity”* (CCC 1666). The family is nothing less than a sign and image of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, for our unbelieving world (CCC 2205).

The Role of the Parish

Before, during and after the children’s preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist every parish should work to create:

- a community that is welcoming, where the Gospel is studied and lived with joy
- a community leading a sacramental life and growing in a life of prayer and discipleship
- a community willing to sustain one another in moments of hesitancy and anxiety

Parent Responsibilities for Sacramental Preparation

The Diocese of Fargo calls upon parents to help suitably prepare their children for reception of the sacraments. The home is where the faith is developed and lived out. Each parent models to their child what the life of faith looks like. To properly assist your child in this time of sacramental preparation, the following is required:

- Attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days with your children.
- Provide proof of baptism to the parish (see form on next page).
- Attend Parent Sessions. Minimum of 2 sessions (4 hours) per each sacrament. (your parish may require more in order to better equip you).
- Attend the Retreat. 3 to 5 hour retreat for each sacrament.
- Attend the Interview. Prior to the celebration of each of the sacraments, the parish priest or designated catechist will interview your child to assess his or her readiness and intention for receiving the sacrament. Ideally, both parents are to be present during the interview so that you can help your child in their final preparations and show your support.
- Do home lessons and tasks with your child to foster love and understanding for the Faith.
- Make sure your child attends the religious education sessions offered by your parish and does any assigned homework.
- At home, work on memorizing prayers. Explain the meaning of the prayers to your child.
- Have family prayer time together daily – make this a priority.
- Live a life of charity, loving God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves (CCC 1822). Look for ‘teachable’ moments throughout the day to talk about the faith.
- Have a Bible and a Catechism of the Catholic Church, as well as religious articles such as a crucifix, holy water and sacred images in the home.
- Regular Reconciliation – Parents model this by their personal participation in the Sacrament. We recommend that once your child has made their First Reconciliation, that your family go back and receive this grace and forgiveness at least once a month.
- Regular Eucharist – Parents model this by their personal participation in the Sacrament. We are obliged to attend Mass each Sunday and Holy Day of obligation. At Mass, we have the opportunity to receive Jesus in the Eucharist (if we meet the required conditions, ccc 1385-1388).

What is a Sacrament?

Out of love, Jesus died on the cross to save us. Out of love, He instituted the Church to save us. Through the Church, He gave us seven concrete ways to help us share in His life; these are the Sacraments of the Catholic Church. (Baptism, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Eucharist, Holy Orders, Marriage, and Anointing of the Sick).

The current Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) defines sacraments in the following way:

1131. The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.

What is Grace?

All Sacraments give grace. Grace is both God's life and God's help. See grace as life in Christ. Thus, receiving grace means growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ and His Family, the Church.

Outward sign shows invisible reality

When each sacrament is properly celebrated, the visible part we see and hear makes present an invisible reality that is truly taking place.¹ For example, in Confirmation we see the anointing of chrism and the laying on of hands by the Bishop, and we hear the words "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit": an

actual physical event is taking place. We cannot see, however, the spiritual event that is taking place: a deepening and strengthening of baptismal grace and the permanent marking of the soul as for public witness.

Grace is both God's life and God's help. The seven sacraments are the only certain means we have to receive God's life. God's help is available at all times in our daily living.

Two things are unfolding whenever any sacrament is celebrated: the visible, physical event of the liturgy; and the invisible, spiritual event of a soul entering into a new and deeper phase of life with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Instituted by Christ

The Sacraments are part of God's plan of salvation and have been entrusted to the Church to safeguard and hand on. Jesus Christ established the Sacraments. If we say that the sacraments were instituted by Christ, does this mean He set in place during His life on earth each of the seven sacraments in their present form as we have them today? (*not exactly*) If not, are the sacraments just inventions of the institutional Church? (*not exactly*) The Church teaches us to steer clear of these two extreme views. The TRUTH: The sacraments truly come from Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. They developed into their present form over time in the life of the Church beginning with the apostolic traditions. The Church has carefully discerned over the centuries how to properly 'dispense' the sacraments under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. See CCC 1116-1117 By establishing the Church, Jesus Christ gave His authority to Peter, the first pope, in order to carry on His mission of salvation.

¹ An excellent resource for understanding more about the sacraments is [Understanding the Sacraments](#) by Peter M.J. Stravinskis. Many of the explanations in this handbook have been drawn from chapter one.

Prayers for Third Grade

This is provided to assist parents in helping their child to memorize these prayers.

Sign of the Cross - Mt. 28:19

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

CCC 233, 2157

Grace Before Meals - Jn 6:11

(Acts 27:25 - The Lord prayed at meals)
Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CCC 2698

Grace After Meals

We give You thanks, almighty God, for all Your benefits. Who lives and reigns now and forever. Amen.

V. May the Lord grant us His peace.

R. And life everlasting. Amen.

CCC 2698

Prayer to the Guardian Angel

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here; ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

Morning Prayer

God, our Father, I offer you today all that I think and do and say. I offer it with what was done on earth by Jesus Christ, Your Son. Amen.

CCC 2698

Jesus, help me to know you and receive your love for me today.

Heavenly Father, help me to know you and receive your love for me today.

Holy Spirit, help me to know you and receive your love for me today.

Bishop Aquila

Simple Prayers

-Jesus, I love you.

-Thank You, God.

-God, how great You are.

CCC 2637-2639

Our Father - Mt 6:9-13

Our Father,
Who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

CCC 2759, 2761, 2777-2865

Hail Mary - Lk. 1:28, 42

Hail Mary, full of grace! the Lord is with thee; blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary,
Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

CCC 2676-2677

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

CCC 2628

Responses to Prayers at Mass

Refer to Parish Worship Guide (Missalette)

Prayers for Third Grade continued

Prayer to St. Michael, the Archangel

Saint Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and the other evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Prayer Before Reconciliation

Come Holy Spirit,
give me Your light to see my sins,
and give me Your help to be sorry for them.
Show me why I sinned.
Help me never again to sin on purpose.

Prayer After Reconciliation

My Jesus, I thank You for washing away my sins in Your Precious Blood.
Help me to accept my cross each day
and not to hurt You or others. I love You with
my whole heart and soul.

Prayer of the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth. Let us pray. O God, who did instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of that same Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CCC 2671

Act of Contrition

(your parish may use a different one)

Oh My God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins, because of Your just punishments, but most of all, because they offend You, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.

CCC 1451

An Adult Understanding of Eucharist & How to Talk to My Child

How Can I Help My Child Prepare for Eucharist?

The most important thing you can do to help your child in the Sacrament of Eucharist is to know, love, and receive the sacrament yourself. The whole purpose of Eucharist is for your child to grow in his or her relationship with Jesus Christ. All the sacraments have this as their purpose. You can help by being a good witness to your child. If you have not gone to Mass in a long time, the simplest way to remedy the situation is to start going again (be sure to go to Reconciliation before receiving Eucharist again). If you don't know exactly what to do, approach a priest and explain the situation. If children see that their parents have a strong connection with their church and that take their faith seriously, they will naturally follow.

The second most important thing you can do to help your child with this sacrament is to take time to talk to him or her and teach them. Explain in your own words what the Sacrament of Eucharist is. Then ask them how they understand the sacrament. Help him or her with learning the responses at Mass. Practice together. Do a Church tour. For more information, read the Catechism of the Catholic Church sections which cover the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist (CCC 1322-1419).

Right now you may not be living the faith as best you could. You might have slowly drifted away from Christ and His Church. The good news is that God is always joyful

whenever anybody begins again. One can start with small, concrete steps and develop on from there. Remember, the Faith is not a checklist of doing things (go to Mass, pray, etc.); rather, we do things in the Church in order to grow in our relationship with a person, Jesus Christ. For example, we go to Sunday Mass, not only because it is an obligation, but also because we want to grow in our love for God.

Lifelong Formation

Again, the most important thing to keep in mind is that you cannot give to your child what you do not have. If you have (or are in the process of acquiring) a knowledge and love of this sacrament, you will be able to communicate that love and knowledge to your child. If you feel as though you are just beginning, that's OK; you and your child can learn together. It is never too late to deepen your love for Jesus in the Eucharist. Make going to Mass each Sunday a priority in your family. God will bless you for your faithfulness to Him.

Remember

God loves us unconditionally. God's greatest gift to us is Jesus, His Son. At Mass we give God thanks and praise – it is an act of worship in which the Church and all her members recall Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for all to bring us eternal salvation. At Mass, God speaks to us through the Liturgy of the Word in the scriptures. And at Mass, God gives us His Son in the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the consecrated host and wine. The bread and wine are not merely blessed symbols, but "by the power of the Holy Spirit", the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Christ himself is truly present!

The following pages are to help you gain an adult understanding of the Sacrament of Eucharist and then how to talk to your children about it.

**The most important thing
you can do
to help your child
in the Sacrament of Eucharist
is to know,
love
and receive the
sacrament yourself.**

Essential Teachings on the Sacrament of the Eucharist

In order to “perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages” Christ provided the Eucharist in which He “is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and the pledge of future glory is given to us” (CCC 1323)

What actually is the Sacrament of the Eucharist?

Jesus gave us the gift of Himself in the Eucharist. Like all the sacraments of the Catholic Church, the Eucharist is an encounter with Jesus Christ. Yet it is the summit of all sacramental encounters with our Lord. The Eucharist is the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ; it is Christ himself. St. Alphonsus Liguori said, “Of all the sacraments, the adorable Sacrament of the Altar is the most excellent. The other sacraments contain gifts of God, but the Holy Eucharist contains God himself.” All the sacraments lead up to it and flow out of it. The Eucharist is the central mystery of our faith. As the Catechism says, “the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.” The Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: “Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.” (CCC 1324-1327) Every Sunday when we attend Mass, we have the option to receive the Eucharist or abstain. It is for our own benefit to receive the Eucharist each time we go to Mass unless we have not met the necessary requirements. We are to receive the Eucharist at least 1x a year (precept of the church CCC 2041-2043).

**The Eucharist is the
Body and Blood,
Soul and Divinity
of Jesus Christ;
it is Christ himself.**

CCC 1324

Criticism?

Many non-Catholics criticize and attack the Eucharist. This stream of criticism, however, is something that the institution of the Eucharist has had to endure from the very beginning. When Jesus made the first announcement of what this sacrament would be, the response was, “This is a hard saying, who can listen to it.... After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer followed him”(Jn 6:60,66) Like the Cross, the Eucharist is a dividing point and a stumbling block.

Until the Reformation in the 16th century, the modern day Catholic understanding of the Eucharist was the universal understanding of all Christians for over 1,500 years. At the heart of this understanding was that the bread and wine are transformed to become the true body and blood of Christ. The Mass is something the Church does in order to be faithful to the words of Jesus himself, “Do this in memory of me.”

The Real Presence of Jesus - Transubstantiation

The Eucharist is a beautiful mystery of our faith. As a mystery, it cannot be understood completely, but it can be understood in part. We can understand that the Eucharist is the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It becomes the body and blood by the “words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit.” (CCC 1333) The name for the transformation of substance from bread and wine to body and blood is called *transubstantiation*.

Even though this miraculous change cannot be understood completely, it is important to note that the Church steadfastly declares that such a change, though miraculous in nature, does not go against the laws of science nor the precepts of reason. In this change of transubstantiation, the physical properties of bread and wine remain the same. The taste of the wafer (host) and wine remains the same before and after the consecration. However, the substance of the bread and wine is changed so that the consecrated bread and wine in its substance becomes Jesus – Body, Blood, Soul & Divinity.

Three Reasons for the Mass

The Eucharistic liturgy (Mass) has three essential dimensions (CCC 1358).

- 1) a thanksgiving and praise
- 2) the sacrificial memorial of Christ and His Body
- 3) the presence of Christ by the power of His word and of His Spirit

Part of attending Mass is to give God thanks and praise. As a sacrificial memorial, the Eucharistic Liturgy is more than just something we casually attend on Sundays to feel good. Consider the following section from the Catechism:

The Eucharist as the sacrificial memorial describes the reality that through the celebration of Mass, we are making present Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

CCC 1366

1367. The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: "The victim is one and the same; the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner.

This paragraph from the Catechism is really two separate quotations from the Council of Trent in 1562. They mean that when anyone attends a valid Eucharistic liturgy, they are in the actual presence of the same sacrifice that Jesus accomplished some 2000 years ago. It is not a mere re-enactment of that sacrifice; it is that very *same* sacrifice. Elsewhere in the Catechism it is described as a *re-presenting* of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross—literally *making present* the sacrifice of the cross across the centuries to where we are now. (CCC 1366)

The sacred reality of the Eucharist is something that is so awesome and "other-worldly" that it is sometimes difficult to appreciate fully its grandeur as we participate in Mass each Sunday. Being a Christian requires us to develop a sense of the sacred in our everyday lives. Receiving the Eucharist often (even daily) can help in developing this sense of the sacred.

Benefits of Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist

Among the many benefits² of receiving the Eucharist are the following (CCC 1391-1397):

1. Nurtures our union with Christ.
2. Preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism.
3. Separates us from sin.
4. Strengthens our charity, which in turn can wipe away venial sins.
5. Preserves us from future mortal sins.
6. Unites us more closely to the Church.
7. Commits us to the poor.

² These benefits can be increased or decreased as a result of our cooperation and our disposition to receive the sacrament. Also, it is necessary to be in a state of grace (i.e., free from mortal sin) to receive the Eucharist.

Stay United to Jesus in the Eucharist

The Eucharist truly is the source and summit of the Christian life. As such, your child's First Eucharist represents an important event in his or her life. If you want great things for your child, you will want them to be united to the Eucharist their whole life; for if they are united to the Eucharist, they will do great things. Look, for example, at the life of Blessed Teresa of Calcuta, known during her life as Mother Teresa. One cannot consider all the good works she accomplished without taking into account the fact that her day, from beginning to the end, was centered on the Eucharist. The same can be said for all the Saints. Your child may or may not accomplish great works that everybody can see and appreciate like those of Blessed Teresa, but a child in love with God can become great in that he or she loves as Jesus loves. What's more, they will be on their way to heaven.

**If you want great things
for your child,
you will want them
to be united
to the Eucharist
their whole life.**

Requirements for Reception (CCC 1385-1388)

To receive Holy Eucharist, we must prepare ourselves by examining our conscience. Anyone conscience of grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion. We must also observe a one-hour fast before receiving communion (this includes chewing gum and drinks other than water). Furthermore, what you wear to Mass (appropriate attire) needs to reflect the honor and respect due to Jesus in the Eucharist.

How to Receive the Eucharist

Everyone is to make a sign of reverence before receiving the Eucharist. The bishop has instructed all the faithful to do a 'profound bow' to show proper reverence for the Eucharist. This means that when the person before you in the communion line is receiving, you are to make a deep bow from the waist and then rise and go forward to receive communion. The Church has approved two ways for receiving the Eucharist. Be sure to practice with your child how to receive the Eucharist, either on the tongue or in the hands. Try both ways. Both ways should be done carefully, with reverence. If receiving on the tongue, make sure the mouth is open wide and the tongue is extended out. (Do not close your mouth too quickly as you risk touching the priest's fingers). If receiving in the hand, overlap one hand over the other and once the host is placed in the hand, the underneath hand moves to gently pick up the host and reverently place it in the mouth. (be sure your hands are washed and clean).

**"Of all the sacraments,
the adorable
Sacrament of the Altar
is the most excellent.
The other sacraments
contain gifts of God,
but the Holy Eucharist
contains God himself."
- St. Alphonsus Liguori**

GOING DEEPER:

A TWO-WEEK READING ASSIGNMENT

In order to help your child prepare for Holy Eucharist, you must know the facts about the Mass and Eucharist as the Church teaches and not just rely on your own memory and understanding.

The following pages are set up in a 14 day reading program, 1 page a day.

Please take 5 minutes a day to read and reflect upon the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Please do this 5 minute daily reflection prior to the second parent meeting.

Make notes. Write down any questions of words you don't understand or things you wish to have explained by an example.

Is there something you disagree with? Write it down!

Is there something that you are amazed at? Write it down!

At the second parent meeting you will have the opportunity to ask your questions and get answers.

This knowledge will allow you to hand on the correct teaching to your child.

Suggested prayer to start each day's reading and reflection time:

Prayer for Decision Making by Saint Francis of Assisi

**Most high and glorious God,
come and enlighten the darkness of my heart.**

Give me right faith,

certain hope,

and perfect love,

that everything I do

may be in fulfillment of your holy will.

Through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen

Day 1: Catechism of the Catholic Church

[1322](#)

The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist.

[1323](#)

"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, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, 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.'"¹³⁵

I. The Eucharist—Source and Summit of Ecclesial Life

[1324](#)

The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life."¹³⁶ "The other 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, our Pasch."¹³⁷

[1325](#)

"The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit."¹³⁸

[1326](#)

Finally, by the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all."¹³⁹

[1327](#)

In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking."¹⁴⁰

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 2: Catechism of the Catholic Church

II. What Is This Sacrament Called?

1328

The inexhaustible richness of this sacrament is expressed in the different names we give it. Each name evokes certain aspects of it. It is called:

Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. The Greek words *eucharistein*¹⁴¹ and *eulogein*¹⁴² recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim—especially during a meal—God's works: creation, redemption, and sanctification.

1329

The Lord's Supper, because of its connection with the supper which the Lord took with his disciples on the eve of his Passion and because it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁴³

The *Breaking of Bread*, because Jesus used this rite, part of a Jewish meal, when as master of the table he blessed and distributed the bread,¹⁴⁴ above all at the Last Supper.¹⁴⁵ It is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection,¹⁴⁶ and it is this expression that the first Christians will use to designate their Eucharistic assemblies,¹⁴⁷ by doing so they signified that all who eat the one broken bread, Christ, enter into communion with him and form but one body in him.¹⁴⁸

The *Eucharistic assembly (synaxis)*, because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church.¹⁴⁹

1330

The *memorial* of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection.

The *Holy Sacrifice*, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior and includes the Church's offering. The terms *holy sacrifice of the Mass*, "*sacrifice of praise*," *spiritual sacrifice*, *pure and holy sacrifice* are also used,¹⁵⁰ since it completes and surpasses all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

The *Holy and Divine Liturgy*, because the Church's whole liturgy finds its center and most intense expression in the celebration of this sacrament; in the same sense we also call its celebration the *Sacred Mysteries*. We speak of the *Most Blessed Sacrament* because it is the Sacrament of sacraments. The Eucharistic species reserved in the tabernacle are designated by this same name.

1331

Holy Communion, because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body.¹⁵¹ We also call it: *the holy things (ta hagia; sancta)*¹⁵²—the first meaning of the phrase "communion of saints" in the Apostles' Creed—*the bread of angels, bread from heaven, medicine of immortality*,¹⁵³ *viaticum*. . . .

1332

Holy Mass (Missa), because the liturgy in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished concludes with the sending forth (*missio*) of the faithful, so that they may fulfill God's will in their daily lives.

Day 3: Catechism of the Catholic Church

III. The Eucharist in the Economy of Salvation

The signs of bread and wine

1333

At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood. Faithful to the Lord's command the Church continues to do, in his memory and until his glorious return, what he did on the eve of his Passion: "He took bread. . . ." "He took the cup filled with wine. . . ." The signs of bread and wine become, in a way surpassing understanding, the Body and Blood of Christ; they continue also to signify the goodness of creation. Thus in the Offertory we give thanks to the Creator for bread and wine,¹⁵⁴ fruit of the "work of human hands," but above all as "fruit of the earth" and "of the vine"—gifts of the Creator. The Church sees in the gesture of the king-priest Melchizedek, who "brought out bread and wine," a prefiguring of her own offering.¹⁵⁵

1334

In the Old Covenant bread and wine were offered in sacrifice among the first fruits of the earth as a sign of grateful acknowledgment to the Creator. But they also received a new significance in the context of the Exodus: the unleavened bread that Israel eats every year at Passover commemorates the haste of the departure that liberated them from Egypt; the remembrance of the manna in the desert will always recall to Israel that it lives by the bread of the Word of God;¹⁵⁶ their daily bread is the fruit of the promised land, the pledge of God's faithfulness to his promises. The "cup of blessing"¹⁵⁷ at the end of the Jewish Passover meal adds to the festive joy of wine an eschatological dimension: the messianic expectation of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. When Jesus instituted the Eucharist, he gave a new and definitive meaning to the blessing of the bread and the cup.

1335

The miracles of the multiplication of the loaves, when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes the loaves through his disciples to feed the multitude, prefigure the superabundance of this unique bread of his Eucharist.¹⁵⁸ The sign of water turned into wine at Cana already announces the Hour of Jesus' glorification. It makes manifest the fulfillment of the wedding feast in the Father's kingdom, where the faithful will drink the new wine that has become the Blood of Christ.¹⁵⁹

1336

The first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Passion scandalized them: "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"¹⁶⁰ The Eucharist and the Cross are stumbling blocks. It is the same mystery and it never ceases to be an occasion of division. "Will you also go away?":¹⁶¹ the Lord's question echoes through the ages, as a loving invitation to discover that only he has "the words of eternal life"¹⁶² and that to receive in faith the gift of his Eucharist is to receive the Lord himself.

The institution of the Eucharist

1337

The Lord, having loved those who were his own, loved them to the end. Knowing that the hour had come to leave this world and return to the Father, in the course of a meal he washed their feet and gave them the commandment of love.¹⁶³ In order to leave them a pledge of this love, in order never to depart from his own and to make them sharers in his Passover, he instituted the Eucharist as the memorial of his death and Resurrection, and commanded his apostles to celebrate it until his return; "thereby he constituted them priests of the New Testament."¹⁶⁴

1338

The three synoptic Gospels and St. Paul have handed on to us the account of the institution of the Eucharist; St. John, for his part, reports the words of Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum that prepare for the institution of the Eucharist: Christ calls himself the bread of life, come down from heaven.¹⁶⁵

1339

Jesus chose the time of Passover to fulfill what he had announced at Capernaum: giving his disciples his Body and his Blood:

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the passover meal for us, that we may eat it. . . ." They went . . . and prepared the passover. And when the hour came, he sat at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." . . . And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood."¹⁶⁶

1340

By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus' passing over to his father by his death and Resurrection, the new Passover, is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the kingdom.

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 5: Catechism of the Catholic Church

"Do this in memory of me"

1341

The command of Jesus to repeat his actions and words "until he comes" does not only ask us to remember Jesus and what he did. It is directed at the liturgical celebration, by the apostles and their successors, of the memorial of Christ, of his life, of his death, of his Resurrection, and of his intercession in the presence of the Father.¹⁶⁷

1342

From the beginning the Church has been faithful to the Lord's command. Of the Church of Jerusalem it is written:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. . . . Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts.¹⁶⁸

1343

It was above all on "the first day of the week," Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection, that the Christians met "to break bread."¹⁶⁹ From that time on down to our own day the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued so that today we encounter it everywhere in the Church with the same fundamental structure. It remains the center of the Church's life.

1344

Thus from celebration to celebration, as they proclaim the Paschal mystery of Jesus "until he comes," the pilgrim People of God advances, "following the narrow way of the cross,"¹⁷⁰ toward the heavenly banquet, when all the elect will be seated at the table of the kingdom.

IV. The Liturgical Celebration of the Eucharist

The Mass of all ages

1345

As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin Martyr for the basic lines of the order of the Eucharistic celebration. They have stayed the same until our own day for all the great liturgical families. St. Justin wrote to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) around the year 155, explaining what Christians did:

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things. Then we all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves . . . and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation.*

When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss.

Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren. He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks (in Greek: eucharistian) that we have been judged worthy of these gifts.

When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: 'Amen.' When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the "eucharisted" bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.¹⁷¹

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 6: Catechism of the Catholic Church

1346

The liturgy of the Eucharist unfolds according to a fundamental structure which has been preserved throughout the centuries down to our own day. It displays two great parts that form a fundamental unity:

- the gathering, the liturgy of the Word, with readings, homily, and general intercessions;
- the liturgy of the Eucharist, with the presentation of the bread and wine, the consecratory thanksgiving, and communion.

The liturgy of the Word and liturgy of the Eucharist together form "one single act of worship";¹⁷² the Eucharistic table set for us is the table both of the Word of God and of the Body of the Lord.¹⁷³

1347

Is this not the same movement as the Paschal meal of the risen Jesus with his disciples? Walking with them he explained the Scriptures to them; sitting with them at table "he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them."¹⁷⁴

The movement of the celebration

1348

All gather together. Christians come together in one place for the Eucharistic assembly. At its head is Christ himself, the principal agent of the Eucharist. He is high priest of the New Covenant; it is he himself who presides invisibly over every Eucharistic celebration. It is in representing him that the bishop or priest acting *in the person of Christ the head (in persona Christi capitis)* presides over the assembly, speaks after the readings, receives the offerings, and says the Eucharistic Prayer. *All* have their own active parts to play in the celebration, each in his own way: readers, those who bring up the offerings, those who give communion, and the whole people whose "Amen" manifests their participation.

1349

The *Liturgy of the Word* includes "the writings of the prophets," that is, the Old Testament, and "the memoirs of the apostles" (their letters and the Gospels). After the homily, which is an exhortation to accept this Word as what it truly is, the Word of God,¹⁷⁵ and to put it into practice, come the intercessions for all men, according to the Apostle's words: "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings, and all who are in high positions."¹⁷⁶

1350

The presentation of the offerings (the Offertory). Then, sometimes in procession, the bread and wine are brought to the altar; they will be offered by the priest in the name of Christ in the Eucharistic sacrifice in which they will become his body and blood. It is the very action of Christ at the Last Supper—"taking the bread and a cup." "The Church alone offers this pure oblation to the Creator, when she offers what comes forth from his creation with thanksgiving."¹⁷⁷ The presentation of the offerings at the altar takes up the gesture of Melchizedek and commits the Creator's gifts into the hands of Christ who, in his sacrifice, brings to perfection all human attempts to offer sacrifices.

1351

From the very beginning Christians have brought, along with the bread and wine for the Eucharist, gifts to share with those in need. This custom of the *collection*, ever appropriate, is inspired by the example of Christ who became poor to make us rich:¹⁷⁸

Those who are well off, and who are also willing, give as each chooses. What is gathered is given to him who presides to assist orphans and widows, those whom illness or any other cause has deprived of resources, prisoners, immigrants and, in a word, all who are in need.¹⁷⁹

1352

The *anaphora*: with the Eucharistic Prayer—the prayer of thanksgiving and consecration—we come to the heart and summit of the celebration:

In the *preface*, the Church gives thanks to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, for all his works: creation, redemption, and sanctification. The whole community thus joins in the unending praise that the Church in heaven, the angels and all the saints, sing to the thrice-holy God.

1353

In the *epiclesis*, the Church asks the Father to send his Holy Spirit (or the power of his blessing¹⁸⁰) on the bread and wine, so that by his power they may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and so that those who take part in the Eucharist may be one body and one spirit (some liturgical traditions put the epiclesis after the anamnesis).

In the *institution narrative*, the power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, make sacramentally present under the species of bread and wine Christ's body and blood, his sacrifice offered on the cross once for all.

1354

In the *anamnesis* that follows, the Church calls to mind the Passion, resurrection, and glorious return of Christ Jesus; she presents to the Father the offering of his Son which reconciles us with him.

In the *intercessions*, the Church indicates that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole Church in heaven and on earth, the living and the dead, and in communion with the pastors of the Church, the Pope, the diocesan bishop, his presbyterium and his deacons, and all the bishops of the whole world together with their Churches.

1355

In the communion, preceded by the Lord's prayer and the breaking of the bread, the faithful receive "the bread of heaven" and "the cup of salvation," the body and blood of Christ who offered himself "for the life of the world".¹⁸¹

Because this bread and wine have been made Eucharist ("eucharisted," according to an ancient expression), "we call this food *Eucharist*, and no one may take part in it unless he believes that what we teach is true, has received baptism for the forgiveness of sins and new birth, and lives in keeping with what Christ taught."¹⁸²

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 7: Catechism of the Catholic Church

V. The Sacramental Sacrifice: Thanksgiving, Memorial, Presence

1356

If from the beginning Christians have celebrated the Eucharist and in a form whose substance has not changed despite the great diversity of times and liturgies, it is because we know ourselves to be bound by the command the Lord gave on the eve of his Passion: "Do this in remembrance of me."¹⁸³

1357

We carry out this command of the Lord by celebrating the *memorial of his sacrifice*. In so doing, *we offer to the Father* what he has himself given us: the gifts of his creation, bread and wine which, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, have become the body and blood of Christ. Christ is thus really and mysteriously made present.

1358

We must therefore consider the Eucharist as:

- thanksgiving and praise to the *Father*;
- the sacrificial memorial of *Christ* and his Body;
- the presence of Christ by the power of his word and of his *Spirit*.

Thanksgiving and praise to the Father

[1359](#)

The Eucharist, the sacrament of our salvation accomplished by Christ on the cross, is also a sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for the work of creation. In the Eucharistic sacrifice the whole of creation loved by God is presented to the Father through the death and the Resurrection of Christ. Through Christ the Church can offer the sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for all that God has made good, beautiful, and just in creation and in humanity.

[1360](#)

The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption, and sanctification. Eucharist means first of all "thanksgiving."

[1361](#)

The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of praise by which the Church sings the glory of God in the name of all creation. This sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ: he unites the faithful to his person, to his praise, and to his intercession, so that the sacrifice of praise to the Father is offered through Christ and with him, to be accepted in him.

The sacrificial memorial of Christ and of his Body, the Church

[1362](#)

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. In all the Eucharistic Prayers we find after the words of institution a prayer called the *anamnesis* or memorial.

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 8: Catechism of the Catholic Church

[1363](#)

In the sense of Sacred Scripture the *memorial* is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men.¹⁸⁴ In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real. This is how Israel understands its liberation from Egypt: every time Passover is celebrated, the Exodus events are made present to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives to them.

[1364](#)

In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present.¹⁸⁵ "As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out."¹⁸⁶

[1365](#)

Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: "This is my body which is given for you" and "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood."¹⁸⁷ In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."¹⁸⁸

[1366](#)

The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it *re-presents* (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its *memorial* and because it *applies* its fruit:

[Christ], our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper "on the night when he was betrayed," [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit.¹⁸⁹

[1367](#)

The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." "And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner . . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory."¹⁹⁰

1368

The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to his intercession with the Father for all men. In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value. Christ's sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering.

In the catacombs the Church is often represented as a woman in prayer, arms outstretched in the praying position. Like Christ who stretched out his arms on the cross, through him, with him, and in him, she offers herself and intercedes for all men.

1369

The whole Church is united with the offering and intercession of Christ. Since he has the ministry of Peter in the Church, the Pope is associated with every celebration of the Eucharist, wherein he is named as the sign and servant of the unity of the universal Church. The *bishop* of the place is always responsible for the Eucharist, even when a *priest* presides; the bishop's name is mentioned to signify his presidency over the particular Church, in the midst of his presbyterium and with the assistance of *deacons*. The community intercedes also for all ministers who, for it and with it, offer the Eucharistic sacrifice:

Let only that Eucharist be regarded as legitimate, which is celebrated under [the presidency of] the bishop or him to whom he has entrusted it.^{[191](#)}

Through the ministry of priests the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is completed in union with the sacrifice of Christ the only Mediator, which in the Eucharist is offered through the priests' hands in the name of the whole Church in an unbloody and sacramental manner until the Lord himself comes.^{[192](#)}

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 9: Catechism of the Catholic Church

[1370](#)

To the offering of Christ are united not only the members still here on earth, but also those already in *the glory of heaven*. In communion with and commemorating the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, the Church offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. In the Eucharist the Church is as it were at the foot of the cross with Mary, united with the offering and intercession of Christ.

[1371](#)

The Eucharistic sacrifice is also offered for the *faithful departed* who "have died in Christ but are not yet wholly purified,"¹⁹³ so that they may be able to enter into the light and peace of Christ:

Put this body anywhere! Don't trouble yourselves about it! I simply ask you to remember me at the Lord's altar wherever you are.¹⁹⁴

Then, we pray [in the anaphora] for the holy fathers and bishops who have fallen asleep, and in general for all who have fallen asleep before us, in the belief that it is a great benefit to the souls on whose behalf the supplication is offered, while the holy and tremendous Victim is present. . . . By offering to God our supplications for those who have fallen asleep, if they have sinned, we . . . offer Christ sacrificed for the sins of all, and so render favorable, for them and for us, the God who loves man.¹⁹⁵

[1372](#)

St. Augustine admirably summed up this doctrine that moves us to an ever more complete participation in our Redeemer's sacrifice which we celebrate in the Eucharist:

This wholly redeemed city, the assembly and society of the saints, is offered to God as a universal sacrifice by the high priest who in the form of a slave went so far as to offer himself for us in his Passion, to make us the Body of so great a head. . . . Such is the sacrifice of Christians: "we who are many are one Body in Christ." The Church continues to reproduce this sacrifice in the sacrament of the altar so well-known to believers wherein it is evident to them that in what she offers she herself is offered.¹⁹⁶

The presence of Christ by the power of his word and the Holy Spirit

[1373](#)

"Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us," is present in many ways to his Church:¹⁹⁷ in his word, in his Church's prayer, "where two or three are gathered in my name,"¹⁹⁸ in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned,¹⁹⁹ in the sacraments of which he is the author, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister. But "he is present . . . most *especially in the Eucharistic species*."²⁰⁰

[1374](#)

The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend."²⁰¹ In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained*."²⁰² "This presence is called 'real'—by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present."²⁰³

1375

It is by the conversion of the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood that Christ becomes present in this sacrament. The Church Fathers strongly affirmed the faith of the Church in the efficacy of the Word of Christ and of the action of the Holy Spirit to bring about this conversion. Thus St. John Chrysostom declares:

It is not man that causes the things offered to become the Body and Blood of Christ, but he who was crucified for us, Christ himself. The priest, in the role of Christ, pronounces these words, but their power and grace are God's. This is my body, he says. This word transforms the things offered.²⁰⁴

And St. Ambrose says about this conversion:

Be convinced that this is not what nature has formed, but what the blessing has consecrated. The power of the blessing prevails over that of nature, because by the blessing nature itself is changed. . . . Could not Christ's word, which can make from nothing what did not exist, change existing things into what they were not before? It is no less a feat to give things their original nature than to change their nature.²⁰⁵

1376

The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation."²⁰⁶

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 10: Catechism of the Catholic Church

1377

The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ.²⁰⁷

1378

Worship of the Eucharist. In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession."²⁰⁸

1379

The tabernacle was first intended for the reservation of the Eucharist in a worthy place so that it could be brought to the sick and those absent, outside of Mass. As faith in the real presence of Christ in his Eucharist deepened, the Church became conscious of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord present under the Eucharistic species. It is for this reason that the tabernacle should be located in an especially worthy place in the church and should be constructed in such a way that it emphasizes and manifests the truth of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

1380

It is highly fitting that Christ should have wanted to remain present to his Church in this unique way. Since Christ was about to take his departure from his own in his visible form, he wanted to give us his sacramental presence; since he was about to offer himself on the cross to save us, he wanted us to have the memorial of the love with which he loved us "to the end,"²⁰⁹ even to the giving of his life. In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us,²¹⁰ and he remains under signs that express and communicate this love:

The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease.²¹¹

1381

"That in this sacrament are the true Body of Christ and his true Blood is something that 'cannot be apprehended by the senses,' says St. Thomas, 'but *only by faith*, which relies on divine authority.' For this reason, in a commentary on *Luke 22:19* ('This is my body which is given for you.'). St. Cyril says: 'Do not doubt whether this is true, but rather receive the words of the Savior in faith, for since he is the truth, he cannot lie.'²¹²

Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore
Masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more,
See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.

Seeing, touching, tasting are in thee deceived;
How says trusty hearing? that shall be believed;
What God's Son has told me, take for truth I do;
Truth himself speaks truly or there's nothing true.²¹³

VI. The Paschal Banquet

[1382](#)

The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion. To receive communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us.

[1383](#)

The *altar*, around which the Church is gathered in the celebration of the Eucharist, represents the two aspects of the same mystery: the altar of the sacrifice and the table of the Lord. This is all the more so since the Christian altar is the symbol of Christ himself, present in the midst of the assembly of his faithful, both as the victim offered for our reconciliation and as food from heaven who is giving himself to us. "For what is the altar of Christ if not the image of the Body of Christ?"^{[214](#)} asks St. Ambrose. He says elsewhere, "The altar represents the body [of Christ] and the Body of Christ is on the altar."^{[215](#)} The liturgy expresses this unity of sacrifice and communion in many prayers. Thus the Roman Church prays in its anaphora:

We entreat you, almighty God,
that by the hands of your holy Angel
this offering may be borne to your altar in heaven
in the sight of your divine majesty,
so that as we receive in communion at this altar
the most holy Body and Blood of your Son,
we may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace.^{[216](#)}

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 11: Catechism of the Catholic Church

"Take this and eat it, all of you": communion

1384

The Lord addresses an invitation to us, urging us to receive him in the sacrament of the Eucharist: "Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."²¹⁷

1385

To respond to this invitation we must *prepare ourselves* for so great and so holy a moment. St. Paul urges us to examine our conscience: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself."²¹⁸ Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion.

1386

Before so great a sacrament, the faithful can only echo humbly and with ardent faith the words of the Centurion: "*Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sed tantum dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea*" ("Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul will be healed.").²¹⁹ And in the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom the faithful pray in the same spirit:

O Son of God, bring me into communion today with your mystical supper. I shall not tell your enemies the secret, nor kiss you with Judas' kiss. But like the good thief I cry, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

1387

To prepare for worthy reception of this sacrament, the faithful should observe the fast required in their Church.²²⁰ Bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest.

1388

It is in keeping with the very meaning of the Eucharist that the faithful, if they have the required dispositions,²²¹ *receive communion when* they participate in the Mass.²²² As the Second Vatican Council says: "That more perfect form of participation in the Mass whereby the faithful, after the priest's communion, receive the Lord's Body from the same sacrifice, is warmly recommended."²²³

1389

The Church obliges the faithful to take part in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feast days and, prepared by the sacrament of Reconciliation, to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, if possible during the Easter season.²²⁴ But the Church strongly encourages the faithful to receive the holy Eucharist on Sundays and feast days, or more often still, even daily.

1390

Since Christ is sacramentally present under each of the species, communion under the species of bread alone makes it possible to receive all the fruit of Eucharistic grace. For pastoral reasons this manner of receiving communion has been legitimately established as the most common form in the Latin rite. But "the sign of communion is more complete when given under both kinds, since in that form the sign of the Eucharistic meal appears more clearly."²²⁵ This is the usual form of receiving communion in the Eastern rites.

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 12: Catechism of the Catholic Church

The fruits of Holy Communion

1391

Holy Communion augments our union with Christ. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus. Indeed, the Lord said: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."²²⁶ Life in Christ has its foundation in the Eucharistic banquet: "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me."²²⁷

On the feasts of the Lord, when the faithful receive the Body of the Son, they proclaim to one another the Good News that the first fruits of life have been given, as when the angel said to Mary Magdalene, "Christ is risen!" Now too are life and resurrection conferred on whoever receives Christ.²²⁸

1392

What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ, a flesh "given life and giving life through the Holy Spirit,"²²⁹ preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism. This growth in Christian life needs the nourishment of Eucharistic Communion, the bread for our pilgrimage until the moment of death, when it will be given to us as viaticum.

1393

Holy Communion separates us from sin. The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is "given up for us," and the blood we drink "shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins." For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins:

For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord. If we proclaim the Lord's death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If, as often as his blood is poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have a remedy.²³⁰

1394

As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity *wipes away venial sins*.²³¹ By giving himself to us Christ revives our love and enables us to break our disordered attachments to creatures and root ourselves in him:

Since Christ died for us out of love, when we celebrate the memorial of his death at the moment of sacrifice we ask that love may be granted to us by the coming of the Holy Spirit. We humbly pray that in the strength of this love by which Christ willed to die for us, we, by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, may be able to consider the world as crucified for us, and to be ourselves as crucified to the world. . . . Having received the gift of love, let us die to sin and live for God.²³²

1395

By the same charity that it enkindles in us, the Eucharist *preserves us from future mortal sins*. The more we share the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from him by mortal sin. The Eucharist is not ordered to the forgiveness of mortal sins—that is proper to the sacrament of Reconciliation. The Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with the Church.

1396

The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church. Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body—the Church. Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body.²³³ The Eucharist fulfills this call: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread:"²³⁴

If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond "Amen" ("yes, it is true!") and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, "the Body of Christ" and respond "Amen." Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true.²³⁵

1397

The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren:

You have tasted the Blood of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brother,. . . . You dishonor this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone judged worthy to take part in this meal. . . . God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful.²³⁶

1398

The Eucharist and the unity of Christians. Before the greatness of this mystery St. Augustine exclaims, "O sacrament of devotion! O sign of unity! O bond of charity!"²³⁷ 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.

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 13: Catechism of the Catholic Church

1399

The Eastern churches that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church celebrate the Eucharist with great love. "These Churches, although separated from us, yet possess true sacraments, above all—by apostolic succession—the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are still joined to us in closest intimacy." A certain communion in *sacris*, and so in the Eucharist, "given suitable circumstances and the approval of Church authority, is not merely possible but is encouraged."²³⁸

1400

Ecclesial 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."²³⁹ It is for this reason that, for the Catholic Church, Eucharistic intercommunion with these communities is not possible. However these ecclesial communities, "when they commemorate the Lord's death and resurrection in the Holy Supper . . . profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and await his coming in glory."²⁴⁰

1401

When, in the Ordinary's judgment, a grave necessity arises, Catholic ministers may give the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick to other Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church, who ask for them of their own will, provided they give evidence of holding the Catholic faith regarding these sacraments and possess the required dispositions.²⁴¹

VII. The Eucharist—"Pledge of the Glory to Come"

1402

In an ancient prayer the Church acclaims the mystery of the Eucharist: "O sacred banquet in which Christ is received as food, the memory of his Passion is renewed, the soul is filled with grace and a pledge of the life to come is given to us." If the Eucharist is the memorial of the Passover of the Lord Jesus, if by our communion at the altar we are filled "with every heavenly blessing and grace,"²⁴² then the Eucharist is also an anticipation of the heavenly glory.

1403

At the Last Supper the Lord himself directed his disciples' attention toward the fulfillment of the Passover in the kingdom of God: "I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."²⁴³ Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist she remembers this promise and turns her gaze "to him who is to come." In her prayer she calls for his coming: "*Marana tha!*" "Come, Lord Jesus!"²⁴⁴ "May your grace come and this world pass away!"²⁴⁵

1404

The Church knows that the Lord comes even now in his Eucharist and that he is there in our midst. However, his presence is veiled. Therefore we celebrate the Eucharist "awaiting the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ,"²⁴⁶ asking "to share in your glory when every tear will be wiped away. On that day we shall see you, our God, as you are. We shall become like you and praise you for ever through Christ our Lord."²⁴⁷

1405

There is no surer pledge or clearer sign of this great hope in the new heavens and new earth "in which righteousness dwells,"²⁴⁸ than the Eucharist. Every time this mystery is celebrated, "the work of our redemption is carried on" and we "break the one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live for ever in Jesus Christ."²⁴⁹

Questions to ask about this section of readings:

Day 14: Catechism of the Catholic Church

IN BRIEF

1406

Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; . . . he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and . . . abides in me, and I in him" (*Jn* 6:51, 54, 56).

1407

The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church's life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his Body which is the Church.

1408

The Eucharistic celebration always includes: the proclamation of the Word of God; thanksgiving to God the Father for all his benefits, above all the gift of his Son; the consecration of bread and wine; and participation in the liturgical banquet by receiving the Lord's body and blood. These elements constitute one single act of worship.

1409

The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's Passover, that is, of the work of salvation accomplished by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, a work made present by the liturgical action.

1410

It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

1411

Only validly ordained priests can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and the wine so that they become the Body and Blood of the Lord.

1412

The essential signs of the Eucharistic sacrament are wheat bread and grape wine, on which the blessing of the Holy Spirit is invoked and the priest pronounces the words of consecration spoken by Jesus during the Last Supper: "This is my body which will be given up for you. . . . This is the cup of my blood. . . ."

1413

By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1640; 1651).

1414

As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God.

1415

Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of penance.

1416

Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant's union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins. Since receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ, it also reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.

1417

The Church warmly recommends that the faithful receive Holy Communion when they participate in the celebration of the Eucharist; she obliges them to do so at least once a year.

1418

Because Christ himself is present in the sacrament of the altar, he is to be honored with the worship of adoration. "To visit the Blessed Sacrament is . . . a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration toward Christ our Lord" (Paul VI, *Mysterium fidei* 66).

1419

Having passed from this world to the Father, Christ gives us in the Eucharist the pledge of glory with him. Participation in the Holy Sacrifice identifies us with his Heart, sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, makes us long for eternal life, and unites us even now to the Church in heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the saints.

Notes

135. SC 47.
 136. LG 11.
 137. PO 5.
 138. Congregation of Rites, instruction, *Eucharisticum mysterium*, 6.
 139. 1 Cor 15:28.
 140. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 18, 5: PG 7/1, 1028.
 141. Cf. Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24.
 142. Cf. Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22.
 143. Cf. 1 Cor 11:20; Rev 19:9.
 144. Cf. Mt 14:19; 15:36; Mk 8:6, 19.
 145. Cf. Mt 26:26; 1 Cor 11:24.
 146. Cf. Lk 24:13-35.
 147. Cf. Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11.
 148. Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17.
 149. Cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34.
 150. Heb 13:15; cf. 1 Pet 2:5; Ps 116:13, 17; Mal 1:11.
 151. Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17.
 152. *Apostolic Constitutions* 8, 13, 12: PG 1, 1108; *Didache* 9, 5; 10:6: SCh248, 176-178.
 153. St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Eph.* 20, 2: SCh 10, 76.
 154. Cf. Ps 104:13-15.
 155. Gen 14:18; cf. *Roman Missal*, EP I (Roman Canon) 95.
 156. Cf. Deut 8:3.
 157. 1 Cor 10:16.
 158. Cf. Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39.
 159. Cf. Jn 2:11; Mk 14:25.
 160. Jn 6:60.
 161. Jn 6:67.
 162. Jn 6:68.
 163. Cf. Jn 13:1-17; 34-35.
 164. Council of Trent (1562): DS 1740.
 165. Cf. Jn 6.
 166. Lk 22:7-20; cf. Mt 26:17-29; Mk 14:12-25; 1 Cor 11:23-26.
 167. Cf. 1 Cor 11:26.
 168. Acts 2:42, 46.
 169. Acts 20:7.
 170. AG 1; cf. 1 Cor 11:26.
 171. St. Justin, *Apol.* 1, 65-67: PG 6, 428-429; the text before the asterisk (*) is from chap. 67.
 172. SC 56.
 173. Cf. DV 21.
 174. Cf. Lk 24:13-35.
 175. Cf. 1 Thess 2:13.
 176. 1 Tim 2:1-2.
 177. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 18, 4: PG 7/1, 1027; cf. Mal 1:11.
 178. Cf. 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:9.
 179. St. Justin, *Apol.* 1, 67: PG 6, 429.
 180. Cf. *Roman Missal*, EP I (Roman Canon) 90.
 181. Jn 6:51.
 182. St. Justin, *Apol.* 1, 66, 1-2: PG 6, 428.
 183. 1 Cor 11:24-25.
 184. Cf. Ex 13:3.
 185. Cf. Heb 7:25-27.
 186. LG 3; cf. 1 Cor 5:7.
 187. Lk 22:19-20.
 188. Mt 26:28.
 189. Council of Trent (1562): DS 1740; cf. 1 Cor 11:23; Heb 7:24, 27.
 190. Council of Trent (1562): *Doctrina de ss. Missae sacrificio*, c. 2: DS 1743; cf. Heb 9:14, 27.
 191. St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrn.* 8:1; SCh 10, 138.
 192. PO 2 § 4.
 193. Council of Trent (1562): DS 1743.
 194. St. Monica, before her death, to her sons, St. Augustine and his brother; *Conf.* 9, 11, 27: PL 32, 775.
 195. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. myst.* 5, 9, 10: PG 33, 1116-1117.
 196. St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 10, 6: PL 41, 283; cf. *Rom* 12:5.
 197. *Rom* 8:34; cf. LG 48.
 198. Mt 18:20.
 199. Cf. Mt 25:31-46.
 200. SC 7.
 201. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 73, 3c.
 202. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1651.
 203. Paul VI, *MF* 39.
 204. St. John Chrysostom, *prod. Jud.* 1:6: PG 49, 380.
 205. St. Ambrose, *De myst.* 9, 50; 52: PL 16, 405-407.
 206. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1642; cf. Mt 26:26 ff.; Mk 14:22 ff.; Lk 22:19 ff.; 1 Cor 11:24 ff.
 207. Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1641.

208. Paul VI, *MF* 56.
 209. *Jn* 13:1.
 210. Cf. *Gal* 2:20.
 211. John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae*, 3.
 212. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 75, 1; cf. Paul VI, *MF* 18; St. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Luc.* 22, 19: PG 72, 912; cf. Paul VI, *MF* 18.
 213. St. Thomas Aquinas (attr.), *Adoro te devote*; tr. Gerard Manley Hopkins.
 214. St. Ambrose, *De Sacr.* 5, 2, 7: PL 16, 447C.
 215. St. Ambrose, *De Sacr.* 4, 2, 7: PL 16, 437D.
 216. *Roman Missal*, EP I (Roman Canon) 96: *Supplices te rogamus, omnipotens Deus: iube hæc perferri per manus sancti Angeli tui in sublime altare tuum, in conspectu divinæ maiestatis tuæ: ut, quotquot ex hac altaris participatione sacrosanctum Filii Corpus et Sanguinem sumpserimus, omni benedictione cælesti et gratia repleamur.*
 217. *Jn* 6:53.
 218. *1 Cor* 11:27-29.
 219. *Roman Missal*, response to the invitation to communion; cf. *Mt* 8:8.
 220. Cf. CIC, can. 919.
 221. Cf. CIC, can. 916.
 222. Cf. CIC, can. 917; *The faithful may receive the Holy Eucharist only a second time on the same day* [Cf. Pontificia Commissio Codici Iuris Canonici Authentice Intrepretando, *Responsa ad proposita dubia*, 1: AAS 76 (1984) 746].
 223. SC 55.
 224. Cf. *OE* 15; CIC, can. 920.
 225. GIRM 240.
 226. *Jn* 6:56.
 227. *Jn* 6:57.
 228. Fanqith, Syriac Office of Antioch, Vol. I, Commun., 237 a-b.
 229. *PO* 5.
 230. St. Ambrose, *De Sacr.* 4, 6, 28: PL 16, 446; cf. *1 Cor* 11:26.
 231. Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1638.
 232. St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, *Contra Fab.* 28, 16-19: CCL 19A, 813-814.
 233. Cf. *1 Cor* 12:13.
 234. *1 Cor* 10:16-17.
 235. St. Augustine, *Sermo* 272: PL 38, 1247.
 236. St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 27, 4: PG 61, 229-230; cf. *Mt* 25:40.
 237. St. Augustine, *In Jo. ev.* 26, 13: PL 35, 1613; cf. SC 47.
 238. *UR* 15 § 2; cf. CIC, can. 844 § 3.
 239. *UR* 22 § 3.
 240. *UR* 22 § 3.
 241. Cf. CIC, can. 844 § 4.
 242. *Roman Missal*, EP I (Roman Canon) 96: *Supplices te rogamus.*
 243. *Mt* 26:29; cf. *Lk* 22:18; *Mk* 14:25.
 244. *Rev* 1:4; 22:20; *1 Cor* 16:22.
 245. *Didache* 10, 6: SCh 248, 180.
 246. *Roman Missal* 126, embolism after the Our Father: *expectantes beatam spem et adventum Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi*; cf. *Titus* 2:13.
 247. EP III 116: prayer for the dead.
 248. *2 Pet* 3:13.
 249. *LG* 3; St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Eph.* 20, 2: SCh 10, 76.

Activities & Resources

**The following pages are just some ways
of helping you teach your child about
the Sacrament of First Eucharist.**

Talking to your Children: Why Do We Have to Go to Mass?

For many parents, this question will be asked by their children more times than they can count. For a time, parents may answer, "Because I said so" but eventually children will need better reasons. When the time comes, the following article written to teenagers, may be helpful in answering the question: why do we have to go to Mass?

For many teens the reason for going to Mass is simple - because parents make us go! (That's OK, they make us do lots of things that we may not want to do - but that are good for us!) But why SHOULD we go to Mass? It's important to remember that we are NOT going there to be entertained! Mass is something WE PARTICIPATE in. Most of our complaints about Mass come from the fact that we don't UNDERSTAND why we are there or what's going on during the mass. So why should we go? TOP 10 reasons to go to Mass:

1. The Eucharist. The Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ is available to us! It is the pinnacle of our life as Christians. What better way to follow Jesus than to receive Him in the Eucharist?! Sometimes the teaching on the Eucharist is hard for us to understand. It was hard for His followers too - read John 6. If you have trouble with your belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist - PRAY! He will help you.

2. Grace. Grace is like Gatorade for the soul. Grace is God's life and God's help given to us to live a better life in Him. We receive grace through the sacraments. Mass is loaded with grace - ready for us to receive. The more open we are to it - by actively participating, the better!

3. The Third Commandment. Keep holy the Sabbath. Simple words, simple meaning. "So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it; because on it God rested from all his work..." (Genesis 2:2) We, too, must keep it a special and holy day. The church teaches that Mass is the most important way to do just that. It is not just a good idea - it is our obligation as People of God. Remember the words of Jesus - "If you love me you will keep my commandments" John 15:15. For Christians the Sabbath is now the first day of the week, Sunday, because it was on Sunday that our Lord rose. we START the week with a day totally devoted to our God. Liturgy Rocks.

4. Community. We are the Church, the Family of God. God's people are not in this world to struggle along by themselves. We are all one in the Body of Christ. At Mass we join with Him in a special way. We join with those around us. It is a time to be with others for prayer and friendship. It is a mystical connecting with all our brothers and sisters around the world, in Heaven and purgatory. Through Christ we become a community unlike any we know on earth. It is a glimmer of what heaven will be like.

5. Prayer. The Mass is the ultimate prayer. There is singing, psalms, prayers of thanksgiving, prayers seeking forgiveness, prayers of worship and praise, the Lord's prayer and more. We pray as individuals and as a group. If you struggle with going to Mass - think of it from this perspective. The words we say are more than just a reply to the priest's words - they are prayer! Read them, say them, sing them, shout them, BELIEVE THEM!

6. The Bible. Every time Mass is celebrated we hear the Word of God. We hear from the Old Testament. It sets the stage for the Gospel reading. We hear from the New Testament - perhaps a letter from Paul or the Acts of the Apostles. In the Gospel we learn about Jesus from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Sometimes

the readings are familiar, sometimes not. You hear more scripture at a Catholic Mass than at any other type of Sunday service! If you don't read the bible on your own - here is a chance to hear it proclaimed. If you do read the bible on your own, Mass is a time to get a better understanding of what you are reading. Jesus never said anything about go and write the Gospel for the world, he said go and PROCLAIM the Gospel. So we do.

7. The Our Father. One of the highlights of Mass is The Lord's Prayer. We use the words Jesus gave us and pray together as a family. Remember - it is the "Our" Father, not the "My" Father. Jesus wants us to pray together! The Our Father is the perfect prayer - we give praise to God, we ask that our lives be lived His way instead of our way, we ask for His continued presence in our lives, we ask for His forgiveness, and we pray for His strength in the battle against evil. It's all there. Pray it! Mean it!

8. Making time with God. If nothing else, ask yourself if you have at least one hour a week to set aside for God. Think of that. Imagine Jesus hanging on the cross, dying for YOU - and all He asks is that you join Him on Sunday for an hour or so, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19) Can you do it? Yes. The question is - will you do it, for Him?

9. Suffering souls in purgatory. The souls in purgatory need our prayers. Special intentions are offered at Mass for those who have died - both as a group and individually. It is important not to assume that anyone who died is automatically in heaven - we must pray for them! And the cool part is those who are in purgatory can't pray for themselves but can pray for us.

10. It's what Jesus wants us to do. Period.

P.S. Once you figure out what Sunday Mass is all about then ask yourself this question. Self, am I the type of person to always do the bare minimum? Do I only show up for the game, or do I spend time practicing? Do I only practice the piano when I have to? If you want to really be good at anything, the bare minimum is never enough. Being a Christian is no different. Try going beyond the minimum with Mass. Find a weekday Mass you can attend even one day a week. What an awesome way to say to God, I am not just trying to squeak into heaven. I want to get as much of You as I can as often as I can.

SOURCE: <http://www.catholicyouth.org/index.html>

Parent / Child Sample Discussion Questions for Eucharist

DIRECTIONS: Parents lead a discussion with your child to talk about the sacrament of Eucharist.

1. What is the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist?

It is Jesus' Body and Blood.

It is the memorial of Jesus' sacrifice of Himself for the forgiveness of our sins and His Resurrection.

It is our prayer of thanksgiving to the Father.

It is our sacred meal.

2. When does Jesus become present in the Holy Eucharist?

Jesus becomes present at the consecration in the Mass.

3. Do you receive Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist? Yes.

4. Do you see Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist? No, because He appears as bread and wine.

5. What sacraments do I receive before receiving the Holy Eucharist for the first time?

Baptism, Reconciliation and Confirmation.

6. What happened when I received Baptism?

Original sin and all my sins and their punishments were washed away. Then, the Holy Spirit came to live inside me and I became a Child of God. Baptism left an indelible mark on my soul.

7. What is an indelible mark?

An indelible mark can never, ever, ever be removed.

8. What happens in the sacrament of Reconciliation?

Reconciliation is the way Jesus has given to me to start over. In Reconciliation my sins that I commit after I am baptized are forgiven.

9. What happens when I receive Confirmation?

I am given the strength I need to live as a disciple and witness of Jesus Christ. Confirmation leaves an indelible mark on my soul, just like Baptism.

10. What must I do to receive Holy Eucharist?

a. Be in the state of grace. Have no serious sin on my soul.

b. Fast one hour, except from water or medicine.

11. What do I do if I have a serious sin on my soul?

I should go to the sacrament of Reconciliation before going to receive Communion.

12. What should I do before Holy Eucharist?

a. Think of Jesus

b. Pray.

c. Ask Jesus to come to me.

13. How should I receive Holy Eucharist?

Right before receiving, you bow from the waist and then receive Jesus either on your hand or on your tongue. You get to decide how you will receive. Both ways are acceptable and approved in the Church.

14. What should I do after receiving Holy Eucharist?

- a. Thank Jesus for coming.
- b. Tell Jesus how much I love Him.
- c. Ask Jesus to help me.
- d. Pray for others.
- e. After Mass, I must be a witness of Jesus to others in my daily life.

15. Why does Jesus come to us in the Eucharist?

Jesus comes to us to help us be a Child of God and to be with us.

16. How often must I go to Mass?

Every Sunday and every holy day of obligation.

17. How often can I go to Mass and receive the Holy Eucharist?

I can go to Mass every day and receive the Holy Eucharist every day.

18. Who did Jesus give the power to change ordinary bread and wine into His Body and His Blood?

The Twelve Apostles and their successors, the bishops and the priests they ordain.

19. When did Jesus give them this power?

At the Last Supper on Holy Thursday.

20. How do bishops and priests get this power from Jesus?

Through the sacrament of Holy Orders.

21. What is the tabernacle?

The holy place that the consecrated hosts are kept in between Masses.

22. Does every Catholic Church have a tabernacle?

Yes. It is usually located near the altar.

23. What should we do when we see the tabernacle?

Make the Sign of the Cross and genuflect (go down on bended right knee).

24. Why do we genuflect when we see the tabernacle?

Because Jesus is really present and He is our Savior and Lord. Genuflecting is a sign of our reverence. This is one way we show Jesus our love.

Learn about Sacred Vestments & Vessels you see at Mass!

Sacred Vestments

Alb: A long, white linen garment reaching to the feet. Symbolizes the garment of the newly baptized, also the purity of soul required for Mass.

Cincture: Cord tied around the waist like a belt.

Stole: Long scarf-like garment worn behind the neck and draped over the shoulders. A sign of priestly office, worn in the celebration of the sacraments.

Chasuble: The cape-like outer vestment put on over the others. This is worn by the preside at the Eucharist. There are different colors which match the Liturgical season or special day.

- 1) green – ordinary time; 2) purple – Lent and Advent;
- 3) red – martyrs, Pentecost, Confirmation, feasts of Holy Spirit;
- 4) white – feasts, funerals, weddings, baptisms;
- 5) rose – 3rd Sunday Advent, 4th Sunday Lent;

Other Vestments

Amice

A white linen square worn over the neck and shoulders under the alb; used to cover the shoulders. The priest prays a prayer when putting it on over his head asking the Lord to clothe him with the helmet of salvation.

Cassock

A full length robe worn by those who serve the altar, as well as, priests, bishops and the pope who also can wear the Cassock instead of the common clerical wear of pants and shirt.

Cope

A long cloak that hooks at the front by the neck, worn on solemn occasions outside of Mass.

Humeral veil

A wide looking scarf that is worn over the shoulders and covers the hands when carrying sacred vessels or the Blessed Sacrament.

Dalmatic

A sleeved outer garment that looks very similar to a chasuble worn by a deacon. A bishop may also wear a dalmatic under a chasuble during solemn Masses.



Priest in alb



Priest adjusts cincture



Priest with the stole



Priest in chasuble

Sacred Vessels

Chalice: Cup of precious metal (inside usually is gold) that holds the wine consecrated at Mass.

Ciborium: Looks like a chalice with a cover. It is made of precious metal and contains the hosts consecrated for distribution to the Faithful in Holy Communion.

Purificator: A small linen cloth used by the priest to dry his fingers and the chalice, when he has washed and purified them after Communion.

Paten: A small plate of precious metal that holds the large host that the priest uses until Offertory.

Pall: A small square of stiffened linen, or of cardboard covered with linen, used to cover the chalice to prevent dust or other matter from falling into it.

Chalice Veil: A cloth covering, of the same color as the Chasuble that conceals the chalice and paten up to the Offertory and after Communion.

Corporal: The linen cloth spread by the priest on the altar at the beginning of Mass. The chalice and host rest upon this cloth.

Burse: Square container for the corporal when the latter is not in use. It is made of the same material and color as the vestments.

Two Cruets: One filled with water and the other with pretend wine.

Lavabo bowl and towel: Bowl that catches the water after the priest washes his hands at the Offertory. The priest wipes his hands on the towel.

Wine: Wine made from grapes, can be red or white.

Bread/Hosts: Must be made with wheat with no additives.



Chalice



Chalice and purificator



Chalice, purificator, and paten with host



Chalice, purificator, paten and pall



The chalice veil covers the chalice, purificator, paten with host and pall



Top: Burse
Bottom: Corporal



Burse with corporal inside is placed on top of the chalice veil

Playing St. Simon Says with your Child for Mass Responses

OBJECTIVE: Assist children in memorizing actions and responses used at Mass.

DIRECTIONS: This game is played like “Simon Says” except we call it St. Simon Says.

Begin with an explanation of who St. Simon is. Simon is the name for Peter, the rock upon which Jesus built His Church. Simon Peter is the head of the Twelve Apostles and the first Pope.

Next, review the gestures and responses below so everyone knows how to do the correct response.

Finally, begin the game by saying “St. Simon says....” and then chose one of the gestures or responses from below.

Possible gestures:

1. ...make the Sign of the Cross
2. ...genuflect
3. ...kneel
4. ...stand
5. ...sit
6. ...scooch over in your pew
7. ...dip your hand in Holy Water

Possible responses:

1. ...say, “the Lord be with you”...and children should say, “And also with you.”
2. ...say, “the Word of the Lord”...and children should say, “Thanks be to God.”
3. ...say, “the Gospel of the Lord,” and the children should say “Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.”
4. ...say, “lift up your hearts,” and the children should say, “We lift them up to the Lord.”
5. ...say, “let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” and the children should say, “It is right to give Him thanks and praise”
6. ...say, “let us proclaim the mystery of faith,” and the children should say, “Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.”
7. ...say, “the peace of the Lord be with you always,” and the children should say, “And also with you”
8. ...say, “this is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, happy are those who are called to His supper,” and the children say “Lord I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.”
9. ...say, “The Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord,” and the children say, “Thanks be to God”
10. ...say, “Let us pray to the Lord,” and the children say, “Lord hear our prayer.”

Possible combination gestures and responses:

1.say, “The Body of Christ”...and children say “Amen” and should bow from the waist, pretend to receive on either their tongue or hand
2. ...say, “a reading from the Gospel according to *Luke,” and children should do the three crosses and respond “Glory to you, O Lord”

*Luke may be replaced with Matthew, Mark or John.