

Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist:

“The Holy Eucharist is the Sacrament which contains the body and blood, soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.” It is called:

- 1) Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God.
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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, above all at the Last Supper.
- 4) The Eucharistic assembly (synaxis), because the Eucharist is celebrated amid the assembly of the faithful, the visible expression of the Church.
- 5) The memorial of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection.
- 6) The Holy Sacrifice, because it makes present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior and includes the Church's offering.
- 7) 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.
- 8) Most Blessed Sacrament because it is the Sacrament of sacraments.
- 9) 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. 1
- 10) 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. (CCC # 1328-32).

Importance:

- 1) The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" because the other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. In other words, the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch is present in the blessed Eucharist (CCC #1324).
- 2) "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.
- 3) 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" (CCC #1325).
- 4) Finally, by the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all (CCC #1326).

Biblical basis: Our belief in this Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist derives from the literal interpretation of the promise of Christ to give his Body and Blood for our spiritual food and drink, as found in St. John's Gospel, Chapter 6, and also in the four independent accounts of the fulfillment of this promise at the Last Supper (Mt. 26; Mk. 14; Lk. 22; 1 Cor. 11). Eucharistic theologians explain the *Real Presence* by a process called *transubstantiation*: the entire "*substance*" of bread and wine is changed into the glorified Body and Blood of Christ, retaining only the "*accidents*" (taste, color, shape, etc.), of bread and wine.

"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'" (CCC #1323). St. John devotes the whole sixth chapter of his gospel (72

verses) to the account of Christ's promise to give us His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink. 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 (CCC # 1341).

Christ taught uncompromisingly that He was giving us His real Body and His real Blood for our spiritual nourishment. Hence, the Catholic Church has taught this truth ever since, from the dawn of Christianity. Consequently, the Church has understood, and understands, Holy Communion to be the reception of the Living Christ Himself. The Church's doctrinal history of Holy Communion goes back to the first century as found in the Didache, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, written about the year 90 A.D.

The Real Presence: The Mass and Holy Communion derive all their meaning from the *Real Presence* of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Eucharistic theologians explain the real presence of Jesus in the consecrated host and wine by a process called "transubstantiation." This means that the *substance* of the consecrated bread and wine is changed to Jesus' glorified body and blood by the action of the Holy Spirit and its *accidents* like color, shape, taste, etc., remain the same. As a result, the Body and Blood of the risen Christ together with the soul and divinity of Christ, and, therefore, the whole Christ, is truly, really, and substantially contained in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist.

Here is the summary of the teaching of the Council of Trent on the Eucharist. "In the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist, the whole Christ is contained under each species, and under each and every portion of either species when it is divided up. After the consecration, the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are present in the marvelous sacrament of the Eucharist. They are present not only in the use of the sacrament while it is being received, but also before and after. Consequently, the true Body

and Blood of the Lord remain in the consecrated hosts or particles that are kept or left over after Communion. Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is to be adored in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist with the worship due to God and including external worship. The Blessed Sacrament is therefore to be honored with extraordinary festive celebrations, solemnly carried from place to place in processions, and is to be publicly exposed for the people's adoration. The Holy Eucharist is to be kept in a sacred place (Council of Trent, October 11, 1551)". No less than eleven canons of the new *Code of Canon Law* deal with "the Reservation and Veneration of the Most Holy Eucharist."

Holy Eucharist as a sacrament of sacrifice: Vatican II states that as a sacrifice, "the holy Eucharist is the center and culmination of Christian life." Why?

- 1) Because it enables us to participate in Christ's sacrifice as a present reality and to benefit from its fruits in our own lives.
- 2) Because it helps us to worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the most perfect way.
- 3) Because it strengthens our charity and unity with Him and with each other in a joint offering of His body and blood to the Father.
- 4) Because it gives us a lasting memorial of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, reminding us of our obligation to make loving sacrifices for others.

The Council of Trent teaches that the sacrifice of the Mass is a true sacrifice in which Jesus really, truly, offers himself to his heavenly Father, no less than he did on the cross.

Why?

Because the same Jesus is really present on the altar through the words of the priest's consecration in the Mass. It is the same identical Priest Who died on Calvary, Who now offers the same Victim, namely Himself. Christ offers himself no less now than he offered himself at the Last

Supper. Christ ordained his Apostles priests when he told them, as we said before, *“Do this in remembrance of me.”*

At the Last Supper, Jesus did more than merely change bread and wine into his own living, human and Divine Self. At the Last Supper he began the Mass, the first one, which was completed on Good Friday the moment Christ expired.

In the Mass is the same identical Jesus, and, as we’ve said before and reemphasize now, Christ can no longer die. Christ can no longer shed his own blood, but the heart of sacrifice is in the will. When God became man, the main reason He became man was to assume a human will so that on the cross He could offer Himself in sacrifice, offer Himself as a man Who, faith tells us, was the living God.

So the double consecration is a sign, the index if you wish, the manifestation, of Christ’s willingness to die again if he could just as on the cross on Calvary, Christ died draining his blood from his living body.

In short, as a sacrifice,

- a) the Eucharistic celebration is an unbloody re-presentation or re-enactment of Jesus’ sacrifice on Calvary, completed in His Resurrection.
- b) We offer Jesus’ sacrifice to God the Father on the altar during Eucharistic celebration for the remission of our sins, using signs and symbols.

Holy Eucharist as a sacrament:

As a sacrament, the Holy Eucharist is an outward sign in and through which we meet Jesus who shares His life of grace with us. In this Sacrament of the Eucharist, we do meet Jesus the risen Lord who comes to us under signs of bread and wine to nourish and strengthen us for our journey through life.

The Eucharistic Meal is a great mystery because during the Eucharistic celebration the substance of bread and wine are converted into Jesus' body

and blood, while their appearances (or “accidents”) remain. We believe in this transformation of bread and wine (called Transubstantiation), because Jesus unequivocally taught it and authorized his apostles to repeat it.

As a sacrament,

a) the Eucharist is a visible sign that gives us God’s grace and God’s life and

b) as a meal, it nourishes our souls.

In addition, as a sacrament, the Holy Eucharist imparts to us Jesus’ abiding presence in our souls. We share in His divine life, which is an assurance of eternal life and the basis for the conviction that we are children of God the Father. God shares His life with Jesus and with all other people. The Eucharist is the sacrament of our union with Jesus. In this sacrament, Jesus gives us his own Body, broken for us on the cross and his precious Blood poured out for us, in order that our sins may be forgiven.

Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist both as a sacramental banquet and a sacrificial offering.

Effects or fruits of the Sacrament of Communion:

1) Sustains the supernatural life. “*If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever.*” “*He who eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has life everlasting*”. (John 52-59).

2) Promises bodily resurrection from the dead: “*I will raise him up on the Last Day*”.

3) Remits Venial Sins: “This Daily Bread (of Holy Communion) is taken as a remedy for daily infirmity” (St. Ambrose).

4) Protects against future sins: It protects the soul from the assaults of temptation like a supernatural armor against the attacks of the world and the devil.

- 5) Curbs the urges of concupiscence. It helps us to control the unruly desires of the will and emotions of the body.
- 6) Gives spiritual joy: It is peace-giving, joy-receiving, and happiness-producing.
- 7) Gives perseverance in grace: The Church tells us the single most powerful guarantee for assurance of dying in God's friendship is frequent and fervent reception of Holy Communion.
- 8) Promotes growth in the supernatural life: Holy Communion increases sanctifying grace, nurtures our spiritual life and enables us to grow in God's grace as no other means available to us in this valley of tears. The Holy Eucharist makes us more like Christ and increases the divine life in our souls.
- 9) Gives remission of sin: Holy Communion removes both the guilt of venial sin and the debt of pain due to our forgiven sins (CCC 1391-1401)