

Theory 3

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS AND THE EUCHARIST

Before examining this section of the Catechism, let us look at two previous articles:

- CCC 1103 In the Liturgy of the Word the Holy Spirit “recalls” to the assembly all that God has done for us.
- CCC 1104 Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but actualizes them, makes them present. The Paschal mystery of Christ is celebrated, not repeated. It is the celebrations that are repeated, and in each celebration there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that makes the unique mystery present.

By the Power of the Holy Spirit the Liturgy and the Sacraments make the saving events of the Life of Jesus PRESENT so that what took place in Him may take place in us.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist

- CCC 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.
- CCC 1323 At the Last Supper...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...

The different names for this sacrament

- CCC 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.

CCC 1329 *The Lord's Supper*

The first Mass began with The Last Supper when Jesus took Bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His disciples saying, "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is My Body which will be given up for you."

When was the second Mass celebrated? On the road to Emmaus on the day of the Resurrection.

CCC 1329 The ***Breaking of Bread***...It is by this action that His disciples will recognize Him after His Resurrection (Luke 24:13-35).

The *Breaking of the Bread* became the title of the Mass. We see this in Acts 2:42,46:

"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." (cf Acts 20:7,11)

CCC 1330 The ***Memorial*** and the ***Holy Sacrifice***, because it makes Present the one sacrifice of Christ the Savior and includes the Church's offering.

CCC 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.

CCC 1332 ***Holy Mass***, because the liturgy...concludes with the sending forth (missio) of the faithful, so that they may fulfill God's will in their daily lives.

Dismissal - Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

The Institution of the Eucharist

CCC 1337 Jesus gave us the Eucharist

- To leave us a pledge of His love in order never to depart from His own
- To make us sharers in His Passover - in His Death and Resurrection
And He commanded His Apostles to celebrate it until His return, "thereby He constituted them priests of the New Testament."

Jesus made the Apostles priests at the Last Supper when He commanded them to make His death and resurrection present by celebrating the Eucharist.

CCC 1343 From that time on down to our own day the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued...with the same fundamental structure.

The Mass has always had two essential parts:

1. The Liturgy of the Word
2. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

CCC 1345 St. Justin Martyr gives us an early account of the Mass written around the year 155 A.D.

St. Justin further states:

This food is called by us Eucharist, of which no one else may have a share, except he who believes that our teaching is true and has been cleansed by the washing for the forgiveness of sins and regeneration and so lives as Christ taught. For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ, our Savior, having been made flesh by a Word of God, had flesh and blood for our salvation, so we have learned that the food made a Eucharist by a word of prayer that comes from Him, from which our blood and flesh are nourished, by change are the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus.

Read CCC 1348-1355 for the order and the flow of the Mass.

3 main things to remember about the Eucharist

CCC 1358 We must therefore consider the Eucharist as:

1. Thanksgiving and praise to the *Father*
2. The sacrificial memorial of *Christ* and His Body
3. The presence of Christ by the power of His word and of His *Spirit*

Thanksgiving and Praise to the Father

CCC 1359 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 humanity.

There is no greater way to give thanks to God than by going to Mass.

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

CCC 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.

What did Jesus mean when He commanded: "Do this in memory of Me."?

CCC 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. In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real.

CCC 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. (Hebrews 7:25-27) "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." (1 Cor 5:7)

CCC 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:

That is why CCC 1367 can say, "The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*."

CCC 1368 The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church.

What to do during the Offertory

There is a certain attitude that we should have, one in which we say, "Father, I give my whole self to You - my prayer, my joy, my work, my suffering...I want to offer myself to You through Jesus..."

The Mass is not about getting something; it's about giving something, giving myself to God. Yet it *is* about getting something. We receive the greatest gift in the universe – God Himself in the Eucharist.

CCC 1370 In the Eucharist the Church is, as it were, at the foot of the cross with Mary, united to the offering and intercession of Christ.

CCC 1371 The Eucharistic sacrifice is also offered for the *faithful departed*.

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. ~St. Monica

The Eucharist is also the Presence of Christ

CCC 1373 Jesus is present in many ways to His Church

- In His Word
- Where 2 or 3 are gathered in prayer
- Through the poor, sick, and imprisoned
- In the sacraments
- He is present most especially in the Eucharistic species

CCC 1374 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*.

This is why we call the Eucharist the Real Presence of Christ.

CCC 1376 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...[is] called transubstantiation.

CCC 1377 Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and in each of their parts.

CCC 1377 The Eucharistic Presence...endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist.

This is why we worship and adore the Eucharist.

In Eucharistic Adoration we are face to face with God. Because Christ loves us and gave Himself for us, it makes perfect sense that He would want to remain with us in the Eucharist (CCC 1379, 1380).

There He waits for us 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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 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. ~St. John Paul II

The reality of the Eucharist goes beyond our senses. It looks and tastes like bread, but it is not. (CCC 1381)

There are three ways to know reality:

1. Observation
2. Reason
3. Revelation

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.”

Communion is the most intimate union with God this side of heaven. (CCC 1382)

According to Bl. Raymond of Capua, spiritual director to St. Catherine of Siena, Jesus appeared to Catherine with a bright red human heart in His hand. He opened her chest and placed it in her and said, “Dearest daughter, as the other day I took your heart that you offered to Me, behold I now give you Mine. From now on it will be in the place of yours.”

The Mass is an exchange of hearts.

CCC 1385 We must prepare ourselves to receive the Eucharist.

Listen to St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

“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 anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.”

Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion.

CCC 1387 To prepare for worthy reception of this sacrament, the faithful should observe the fast required in their Church. Bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest.

CCC 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. But the Church strongly encourages the faithful to receive the Holy Eucharist on Sundays and feast days, or more often still, even daily.

The fruits of Holy Communion

CCC 1391 *Holy Communion increases our union with Christ.*

The Lord said:

*"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him."
(John 6:56)*

Holy Communion nourishes our soul

CCC 1392 Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ...preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism. This growth in Christian life needs the nourishment of the Eucharist Communion, the bread for our pilgrimage until the moment of death.

CCC 1393 *Holy Communion separates us from sin.* The Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins.

If as often as his blood is poured out it is poured out 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. ~St. Ambrose

Holy Communion strengthens our charity

CCC 1394 As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity...and *wipes away venial sins.*

CCC 1395 The Eucharist *preserves us from future mortal sins.*

CCC 1397 *The Eucharist commits us to the poor.*

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!"

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 (CCC 1398).

How do we receive communion in a holy manner?

Aside from being in a state of grace, there are some practical steps to be taken in order to benefit the most from this solemn encounter:

1. Pay close attention to the readings during the Liturgy of the Word. If possible, meditate on these readings before going to Mass. Let the sacred word seep deep in your soul. Ask the Holy Spirit to unlock the meaning for you. Ponder it, like the holy man in Psalm 1, whose “delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:2). This is how our soul will become like his, planted near streams of running water, allowing us to yield good fruit in due season and to prosper on all that we do.
2. Necessity of mental prayer every day. Suffice it to say that in order to really experience the life-transforming power of Christ in the Eucharist, daily meditation is indispensable and essential!
3. Thanksgiving after Communion. Eucharist, in fact, means ‘thanksgiving’ in Greek. And for what shall we thank Him?
 - a. For the gift of Divine Life and adoption as divine sons and daughters.
 - b. For our own natural life and all of the love we receive.
 - c. For the communion we share with His Blessed Mother and ours, as well as communion with all of the saints.
 - d. For healing that is right now taking place in our souls, as the old Adam and Eve are being transformed into the new, into Christ and Our Lady.
 - e. For strength to resist temptation and to grow in the virtues.
 - f. For anything and everything else that is good that you can think of.
 - g. We needn’t say anything, of course. We can sit and just be with Him; we can just be warmed by His divine rays, the way we do when we are in the sun on a warm day. The plant needs to do nothing in order to receive the nutrients of the sun. We just need to ‘be still and know that He is God.’
4. Eucharistic Adoration. Nothing increases our faith more than to come before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and adore Him there; to see Him there, and to know that He hears and loves us. “Beloved, have this confidence in him that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours” (1 Jn 5:14).
5. Practice the Presence of God. Spend time listening to God during Mass in the Liturgy of the Word and homily, during our Thanksgiving after Holy Mass, during our Holy Hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and throughout the day. Mother Theresa once stated that the fruit of silence is

prayer. When we hear the Lord speaking through these means, through others, through the circumstances of our day, we will grow more attuned to hearing and responding to Him. This is how we know that He wills our happiness, and we will begin to experience it in new and profound ways and will want more and more of it!

Hence, to have a Eucharistic spirituality is to take seriously the Divine Presence of the Lord in the Eucharist; to take seriously the salvific nature of Holy Mass, and the need to live out this sacrificial life ourselves. Unless we become like the grain of wheat and die to ourselves, we will not have life within us. “He who seeks to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 10:39).

We must discipline our inordinate desire for comfort and our excessive desire for even good things by simply practicing self-denial, either interiorly, like when we avoid thinking about ourselves, avoid negative thoughts, or strive to keep custody of our heart and eyes to name three examples, or externally, like when we fast or offer up something we have a perfect right to but deny ourselves use or access to it. In this way, we will be filled with the Spirit of God, which is opposed to the spirit of the flesh. (cf. Rom 8 and Gal 5)

Conclusion – Why go to Mass?

CCC 1405 **There is no surer pledge or clearer sign of this great hope in the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells 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 forever in Jesus Christ.**

The benefits of participating in Mass are many:

- Jesus *invites* us to Mass. He longs for us to meet Him in the celebration of the Eucharist.
- Jesus tells us that Holy Communion provides the means for our eternal salvation “...if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever...” (CCC 1406)
- Jesus “pours out the graces of salvation” to those attending Mass. (CCC 1407)
- We actually get to be part of the re-presentation of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, celebrating the memorial of Christ’s Passover through hearing the Word of God, offering thanksgiving in community, and participating in the Holy Sacrifice. (CCC 1408, 1409) We get to be present at the Miracle of Miracles.
- Christ himself, through the ministry of the priest, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. (CCC 1410)

- We don't have to be in the state of grace just to attend Mass. However, if we are in the state of grace, we can receive Jesus in Holy Communion, which pours out even more benefits: (CCC 1416)
 - Increased union with the Lord
 - Forgives venial sins
 - Preserves us from serious sins
 - Strengthens the bonds of unity with Christ
 - Reinforces the unity among all the members of the Church
- To be in a state of grace so that we can receive Holy Communion, we must attend Mass on Sundays (or the Saturday vigil), as well as any Holy Days of Obligation (CCC 1389); in this way, we can benefit from the treasury God offers us.

CCC 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.

Additional resources in Toolbox:
 Why Go to Mass on Sunday?
 Thanksgiving After Communion
 Non-Catholics and Receiving Communion
 Biblical Foundations for the Mass