

# EUCCHARIST: SOURCE AND SUMMIT OF OUR CHRISTIAN LIVES

*The gift of the Eucharist is rich in meaning and an inexhaustible source for our spirituality as Catholics. Below is a sampling of some of the multi-faceted dimensions of the Eucharist. By reflecting upon these perspectives on the Eucharist we can grow in our appreciation of this Holy Sacrament and its connection to our daily life and the world around us.*

## **I. Eucharist as Memorial**

“Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his Death and Resurrection, we offer you, Lord, the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation, giving thanks that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and minister to you.” (Eucharistic Prayer III)

“It is in the Spirit that we are enabled to remember the actions of Jesus. This remembrance transforms the history of Jesus, according to the flesh, into a mystery actually present and living for us. The movement of faith, recalling the mysteries of Christ’s life, actualizes them anew.” (E. Kilmartin, The Eucharist in the West, pp. 304-305)

*Why is it important to remember the saving Death and Resurrection of Christ?  
What happens when we forget who we are, where we came from, and to whom we owe our life?*

## **II. Eucharist as Thanksgiving**

“It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord holy Father, almighty and eternal God.” (Preface)

“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.’” (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1360)

*If everything we are and all that we have is a gift of God, then what is our obligation to give thanks to God? How is gratitude the first act of a faithful steward?  
How does being a thankful person help me to be a more generous person?*

## **III. Eucharist as Sacrifice/Offering**

“May he make of us an eternal offering to you....” (Eucharistic Prayer III)

“We offer you his Body and Blood, the sacrifice acceptable to you which brings salvation to the whole world.” (Eucharistic Prayer IV)

“The problem posed by each Eucharistic celebration to those who attend it, then, is that of the offering to be associated to the offering of the Savior. All are invited to ask themselves what they ought to offer. Without this personal involvement in the offering, the sacrifice fails to attain its objective, because the offering of Christ is sacramentally renewed only because we can unite ourselves to him.”  
(The Eucharist, Gift of Divine Love, Crossroad Publishing Co., NY, 2000)

*What is the sacrifice we offer at Mass? What does it demand of us personally? How is sacrifice an act of letting go in love? How does Christ’s sacrifice transform us and the world?*

#### **IV. Communion**

“Grant that, by the power of the Spirit of your love, we may be counted now and until the day of eternity among the members of your Son, in whose Body and Blood we have communion.” (Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs I)

“The gesture of breaking bread done by Christ at the Last Supper, which in apostolic times gave the entire Eucharistic Action its name, signifies that the many faithful are one body (I Cor 10: 17) by receiving Communion from the one Bread of Life, which is Christ, who for the salvation of the world died and rose again.” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal, #83*)

*How does our reception of Holy Communion not only draw us into Christ but into the loving communion of the Trinity? How is the Rite of Peace before we receive Communion a fitting expression of the community’s solidarity in Christ when we share the one bread and one cup?*

#### **V. Real Presence**

“Blessed indeed is your Son, present in our midst when we are gathered by his love, and when, as once for the disciples, so now for us, he opens the Scriptures and breaks the bread.” (Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs I)

“In the celebration of the Eucharist, the glorified Christ becomes present under the appearances of bread and wine in a way that is unique, a way that is uniquely suited to the Eucharist. In the Church’s traditional theological language, in the act of consecration during the Eucharist the “substance” of bread and wine is changed by the power of the Holy Spirit into the “substance” of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. At the same time, the “accidents” or appearances of bread and wine remain.....This change at the level of substance from bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is called ‘transubstantiation.’ According to Catholic faith, we can speak of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist because this transubstantiation has occurred.” (*The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic of Bishops, 2001*).

*What are the ways in which the Church expresses its belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Liturgy?*

#### **VI. Eucharist leads to Mission**

“Do this in memory of me.” (Institution Narrative)

“May this Sacrifice of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord, advance the peace and salvation of all the world.” (Eucharistic Prayer III)

“Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.” (Dismissal at Mass)

“..entering into communion with Christ in the memorial of his Pasch also means sensing the duty to be a missionary of the event made present in that rite. The dismissal at the end of Mass is a *charge* given to Christians, inviting them to work for the spread of the Gospel and the imbuing of society with Christian values.”

*(John Paul II, Mane Nobiscum Domine, #25)*

“For the faithful who have understood the meaning of what they have done, the Eucharistic celebration does not stop at the church door....Once the assembly disperses, Christ’s disciples return to their everyday surroundings with the commitment to make their whole life a gift, a spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God (cf. Romans 12;1). They feel indebted to their brothers and sisters because of what they have received in the celebration, not unlike the disciples of Emmaus, once they had recognized the Risen Christ ‘in the breaking of the bread’ (cf. Luke 24; 30-32), felt the need to return immediately to share with their brothers and sisters the joy of meeting the Lord (cf. Luke 24; 33-35).” (*John Paul II, On Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy, #45*)

*How do we build a bridge from our experience of participating in the Eucharist to our daily activities and our engagement with society?*

*What is it about our celebration of the Eucharist that compels us to be missionary?*

## **VII. Foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet**

“Here may prayer, the Church’s banquet, resound through heaven and earth as a plea for the world’s salvation. Here may the poor find justice, the victims of oppression, true freedom. From here may the whole world clothed in the dignity of the children of God, enter with gladness your city of peace.”

*(Dedication of a Church and Altar)*

*“And so, with the Angels and all the Saints we declare your glory, as with one voice we acclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord.....” (Preface to Eucharistic Prayer II)*

*How is the liturgy like having one foot on earth and one foot in heaven?*

*How can the liturgy be a source of hope for us today?*

*Eucharist Summary  
Revised October 2014*