

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ • Year B • June 2, 2024



*Lord Jesus Christ,
we worship and adore you
present and living among us
in the Sacrament
of your Body and Blood.
Sharing in this
most holy Eucharist
may we become
what we receive.*

Sunday Word

Exodus 24:3-8
Psalm 116:12-13, 15-18
Hebrews 9:11-15
Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

The People Live in Accord with God's Words

Moses sprinkles the people with animal blood to signify the old Covenant established between them and God. They are to live in accord with his words—his Commandments—found in Scripture.

Christ Enters the Sanctuary Once for All

Christ enters the heavenly temple and obtains for us Salvation, shedding his blood for us. The New Covenant, established by his sacrifice, remains in force for all time.

The Lord Offers Us His Body and Blood

At the Last Supper, Jesus identifies himself with the bread and wine of the Passover meal. He says, "This is my body; this is my blood." We partake of his very Body and Blood. We eat and drink the kingdom meal.

Church Teaching: The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

On this solemnity, the Church contemplates the Eucharistic banquet of Christ. Eating and drinking this sacred bread and cup, the Church proclaims the Death of the Lord until he comes in glory. In obedience to Jesus, the Church carries out his command to do this in his memory. The sacrifice of the Lord in the Eucharist is offered again to the Father through the gifts of bread and wine, by the power of the Holy Spirit and the very words of Christ himself.

During the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, we hear those words again, spoken by the presiding priest or bishop. By this consecration, the bread and wine undergo transubstantiation into the Body and Blood of Christ. When believers eat and drink the Eucharist, although they outwardly taste the fruits of the earth and our human hands, they inwardly experience in faith the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself on our behalf.

The presence of Christ in the Eucharist continues for as long as the Eucharistic species (the bread and wine) subsist. That Real Presence exists wholly and totally in each, such that whether

an individual consumes only the Eucharistic bread or only the Eucharistic wine, *both* the Body and Blood are received.

What is the significance of the Real Presence? In this sacred meal, we receive and partake of the divine presence so that singing, praying, listening, and making the ritual responses, believers in Holy Communion are joined to Christ's own self-sacrifice to the Father. Catholics name this sacrament in a variety of ways, such as

- *Eucharist*: from Greek, literally *thanksgiving*. We give thanks to God for our creation, Redemption and sanctification.
- *The Lord's Supper*: because Christ instituted this sacrament in that blessed event.
- *Breaking of the Bread*: his disciples recognized the Risen Lord in this ritual table action, which recalled the Last Supper.
- *Most Blessed Sacrament*: because it is the Sacrament of Sacraments.
- *Holy Communion*: through it we are united to Christ and to one another.

The *Amen* or *Yes* to God that the assembly proffers at the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer acts as a prelude to their receiving Holy Communion, in effect saying to the Lord: *Here we are. We come to do your will in the world.* Fed by the Real Presence, the Body and Blood of Christ, the faithful are united to the Lord, transformed and strengthened by him for service in the world.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

The Eucharist represents the source and summit of the entire Christian life. In it, the sanctifying action of God reaches its high point, containing the Church's whole spiritual good, namely Christ himself. The Eucharist provides the grace necessary for us to be on mission with Christ in the world precisely because it opens for us our communion with the divine life of the Holy Trinity and union with the entire People of God.

Key Terms

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

Change of the whole substance of bread and wine into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ, even as outward characteristics, or species, remain (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1376).

REAL PRESENCE

Denotes true and Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist; believers deepen faith in the Real Presence through adoration and Communion at Mass, in visits to the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle, and at its exposition (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1377).

EXPOSITION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Ritual action where the Eucharist is taken from its place of reservation, exposed in a sacred vessel containing it (a ciborium) or displaying it (a monstrance), and adored and worshiped (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1378).

Voices of Faith

[Christ offered] himself for us. . . . 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.

— Saint Augustine

The Church and the world have a great need of eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us be generous with our time in going to meet Him in adoration and in contemplation that is full of faith . . .

— Pope John Paul II

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

1373 (Christ's presence), 1375 (affirmation of Real Presence), 1378 (worship of the Eucharist), 1379 (purpose of tabernacle)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 17 (The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Christian Life), especially pages 223 – 227

Compendium— Catechism of the Catholic Church:

273 (institution of Eucharist), 281 (Church participates in the Eucharistic sacrifice)

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