Eucharist: Food that Satisfies Our Deepest Hunger

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Two of them that same day were making their way to a village named Emmaus, seven miles distant from Jerusalem. …Then the two recounted to them what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.


I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.

John 6:51

Sacraments are means through which God share Himself with us.

The basic structure of Mass (Liturgy of Word and of Eucharist) dates back to the First Century, when Christians combined their Eucharistic liturgy with the Jewish traditional synagogue “Word” service.

We may not have people hungry for a plate of rice or for a piece of bread in New York City, but there is a tremendous hunger and a tremendous feeling of unwantedness everywhere. And that is really a very great poverty. We don’t expect hunger here today, in Western countries. We don’t expect, maybe, that terrible loneliness. But everywhere today hunger is not only for a piece of bread, but hunger for God, hunger for love.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

We partake in the Eucharist because we are hungry. Ours is an elemental hungering. We want sustenance. We crave nourishment beyond food and drink that sustain our physical lives. We hunger for life to be spiritually meaningful and for it to be redeemed from the evil and viciousness that all too often mar it. Our hunger is the human appetite to be in communion with one another. Like the thirst of which the psalmist spoke so long ago, it is also our inescapable longing for God.”

J. Robert Baker, Barbara Budde

The “Paschal Mystery” (the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus) is available to us in the Eucharist.

The wheat and the grapes represent our lives…the ordinary sacrifice of our lives ground and crushed, offered to God who returns the gifts as extraordinary, life-giving Eucharistic food.

The great mystery of the Eucharist is that God’s love is offered to us not in the abstract, but in a very concrete way; not as a theory, but as food for our daily life. The Eucharist opens the way for us to make God’s love our own… Whenever you receive the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist, his love is given to you, the same love that he showed on the cross.

Fr. Henri Nouwen

The mystery of God continues to unfold in our world. The dying and rising of Christ in our own lives…and in the world connects us to the “Liturgy of the World.”

Fr. Karl Rahner, SJ

How the bread and wine at Mass is “transubstantiated” into the Body and Blood of Christ is mystery…and that is as it should be with a God infinitely greater than us.
When you look at the Crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you then. When you look at the Sacred Host, you understand how much Jesus loves you now. 

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Is not the cup of blessing we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a sharing in the Body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”

1 Corinthians 10: 16-17

The Vatican II document, Lumen Gentium, calls the Eucharist “the source and summit of Christian life”.

In celebrating the Eucharist, we are called to be the Body of Christ for the world.

Jesus speaks in the silence of the mystery of the Eucharist and reminds us each time that following him means going out of ourselves and making our lives not something we ‘possess,’ but a gift to him and to others.

Pope Francis

When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord’s death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and “the work of our redemption is carried out.” This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only after he had left us a means of sharing in it as if we had been present there.

Pope John Paul II

For us, the eucharistic banquet is a real foretaste of the final banquet foretold by the prophets…to be celebrated in the joy of the communion of saints. The more ardent the love for the Eucharist in the hearts of the Christian people, the more clearly will they recognize the goal of all mission: to bring Christ to others.

Pope Benedict XVI

Eucharist is both sacrifice and meal.

From the first generation after Christ, the Church understood the Eucharist to be the real presence of Jesus.

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life, going to Beer-sheba of Judah…and went a day’s journey into the desert, until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death… He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree, but then an angel touched him and ordered him to get up and eat. He looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water. After he ate and drank, he lay down again, but the angel of the Lord came back a second time, touched him, and ordered: “Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you!” He got up, ate and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

1 Kings 19: 3-8

God made us; invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other.

C. S. Lewis

The table awaits us at which our baptismal life is fed over and over again. We have every reason to cry out in gratitude: alleluia, alleluia!

Balthasar Fischer
Have you ever taken a long, maybe really long, car trip? Most of us probably have. Can you remember what it was like? The sights, the fun, the fatigue, the stops. Long travels, whether in a car or on a bike or walking a trail out in nature can, upon reflection, be a metaphor for the journey of life.

Sometimes our lives are headed uphill, sometimes downhill. Sometimes we’re traveling in sunny, pleasant conditions, sometimes we’re immersed in clouds, fog, and even the dark of night. But no matter, onward we go because we have a destination that we need to reach.

For the Catholic Christian person, the road of life is traveled in faith. Baptism is so important because it is our starting point and our compass. It orients us for the journey of discipleship, the close following of our Lord, Jesus. Baptism gives us a special grace-filled relationship to Christ, and through him, to all the baptized who become our sisters and brothers in Christ.

Now, if Baptism sends us forth on a path of Christian discipleship, the Eucharist is our food for the journey! Whether we refer to it as the Bread of Life, the Blessed Sacrament, or Body of Christ, the Eucharist is the most intimate gift Christ leaves to us. It actually is, in a way no one can fully grasp, the presence of Christ with us and in us!

The Eucharist is real food and real drink, ordinary foods made from wheat and grapes that we lift up to God, returned to us as the extraordinary sacrament of Christ for us. It is made possible by Jesus’ act of complete surrender to the will of the Father, whereby he offers up his life, his love, and finally his body and blood on the Cross.

The Eucharist embodies the transformative power of the Cross. It represents the Paschal Mystery, from which we know that, in Christ, death no longer has power to destroy… that God’s grace is greater than sin and darkness. The Eucharist, first shared with his disciples on the night before he died, contains Jesus’ everything, given so that we might live more fully here in this world and ultimately be granted a share in life eternal.

And so, as at the Last Supper, Christ wishes today to feed us. He longs to be our refreshment, our food for the difficult, beautiful journey of life to which God calls us. When we partake in the Eucharist we are tapping into the very life of God, made fully available to us now and forever through the death and Resurrection of Christ. It is right that the Vatican II document, Lumen Gentium, frames the Eucharist (both as sacrament and as the liturgical celebration) as “the source and the summit of Christian life”!

Certainly this is something to keep in mind on those days we might feel resistant to attending Mass. Or when we find ourselves a bit bored and wondering what we are getting out of Mass. Mass is, of course, more about participation than simply receiving. It is more about us than me. The Eucharist, as liturgy, is a communal act of divine worship, where everyone’s full presence and active prayer is vital in this greatest prayer of the Church.

After all God has done for us in Christ, why would we ever try to travel through life without help? Jesus knew how difficult it would be for us to follow in his path. That is precisely why he gave us his Body and Blood, mystically present in the Eucharist…so that he could be intimately present to us, nourishing us for the journey of Christ-like discipleship. Let us always stay connected to the love of Christ offered to us in this Bread of Life. Christ shares it with us that we might remain true to the dignity of our baptismal identity and stay on the course our Baptism set.

Our National Directory for Catechesis reminds us that “we are called to realize that we become what we receive… which has great implications for how we live and act.” (p 126) Saying “Amen” when we take the Eucharist should not only be a “yes, I believe”, but also a “yes, I become”. In our life journey as pilgrim disciples, may the Eucharist not only be the Body of Christ for us. May it also be our food to help us together to become more fully the voice, the heart, the Body of Christ for our families, for our neighborhood and for our world today!