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Catechizing Toward the Eucharist

by Rolando Moreno

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in *communion*, in intimacy with Jesus Christ” (Catechesis in Our Time #5). There is not a more intimate way to encounter our Lord on earth than receiving the *whole Christ, truly, really and substantially contained* in the most Blessed Sacrament (Council of Trent DS 1651). Since catechesis seeks to put people into communion with Christ, it could be argued that all of catechesis takes on a *Eucharistic character*. “Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of human beings” (CT # 23). Good catechesis orients one toward receiving our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, whether for the first time (First Holy Communion) or every time thereafter. Nourished by catechesis and the ministry of the Word, we become predisposed to receiving Christ in the Holy Eucharist. “Every form of catechesis necessarily leads to the Sacraments of faith” (CT 23). To reverse the current state of disbelief in the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist by many of our fellow Catholics (70%), we, in leadership roles, must first cultivate a greater love for our Eucharistic Lord. Imagine if every parish staff member charged with handing on the faith devoted themselves to receiving our Lord as often as possible, perhaps daily and with an added hour each week in Eucharistic Adoration, our parishes and ministries would be transformed.

***O what could my Jesus do more,
Or what greater blessing impart,
O silence, my soul, and adore,
And press Him still near to thy heart.***

(Anonymous: *Holy Communion*. In Caswall’s *Lyra Catholica*, 19th cent.)



What's Coming Up

July 8 at 11am: We are hosting a virtual workshop **in Spanish** with the Catechetical Institute of Franciscan University. The workshop is introductory and will discuss how to best utilize the platform for our Hispanic Ministry Leaders. To register click [HERE](#)

July 12-16: Come to the 48th **Annual Institute in Catholic Teaching**, at Our Lady of Peace Retreat House in Beaverton. The theme this year is "The Mysterious Wisdom of God" See last month's newsletter for more explanation of the theme. Click [here to register](#)

July 14: St. Joseph: The Custodian of Two Hearts. A lecture by Fr. Theodore Lang on The Archdiocese Facebook Page. Click [here](#) to take you to the site.

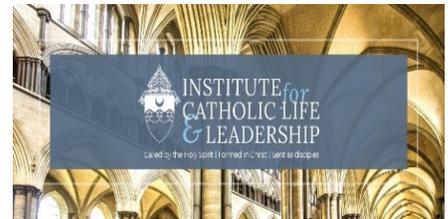
July 16 - 17: Ignite Your Torch will have a regional in person in Roseburg and Vancouver WA. High school conference attendees must sign up, as a group, with a chaperone. Religious are flying in from all over the US to lead workshops on a variety of topics including vocations, faith journeys and pro-life issues. Streaming keynotes will link up other regional pods in California and Seattle. Click to [register](#).



here

The Institute for Catholic Life and Leadership

We are happy to announce that the Institute will offer a new cohort of students for our Foundational Certificate in Theology and Pastoral Ministry!! **The new cohort will take place at St. Joseph parish in Salem! Registration is now open!** If you are interested in learning your faith more in-depth or have catechists who would like formation, please refer them to the Institute. To register and more information go to our [website](#)



Catechetical Institute

The Catechetical Institute is an easy way to grow your understanding of both your mission and develop skills in teaching the faith. Available in English and Spanish, and with multiple tracts of study the Catechetical Institute offers an easy way to receive catechist training from your home. There are many workshops, which are short and simple, putting liturgical catechesis in your catechists' hearts and minds. Workshops like [Introducing Liturgy to Young Children](#) and [Sacramental Economy](#), which explains that sacraments are God's chosen channels of supernatural life, His plan for doing even more than saving us.



It also has two Spanish tracks, in which you can just do one workshop, or you can get certification. [La Iglesia: dispensadora de los misterios y guardián del depósito de la fe](#) este taller explorará la gloriosa convocatoria de Dios a las almas que nosotros llamamos la Iglesia, que es una, santa, católica y apostólica.

Franciscan University also offers every year an amazing opportunity for growth at the [St. John Bosco Conference](#) which is happening this year on **July 12 -15**. There are well over 50 different speakers and many different tracks to individualize your learning. For more information and scholarship ideas contact rmoreno@archdpx.org

Articles on Discipleship

The Catechetical Review is a great resource for all who teach the faith in parish catechetical ministry. This wonderful [article](#) on the Eucharist is by Peter Kreeft, a professor from Boston College. It is also available in [Spanish](#).



In the first part, Dr. Kreeft explores several important issues that arise when we consider the questions of "who" and "when" as they relate to Christ in the Eucharist. In the second article, he will examine three final questions, to help us better understand the Church's teaching concerning our Eucharistic Lord. This would be a chance for all staff to read and reflect on what it means to receive the Eucharist worthily.

Online Video Resources for Summer

In addition to the resources offered by Monsignor O'Conner in the following article. Scott Hahn has a powerful presentation which explores the key misunderstandings people have about the Eucharist. He explains the Church's teaching from a scriptural and historical perspective in an entertaining and thorough fashion. More locally, Fr. Derek Lappe, of Bremerton WA has developed [a short documentary film](#) on Eucharistic miracles, with the help of his parishioners.



Speaker Spotlight *Msgr. Gerard O'Conner*

The paradox of this month's news cycle is that the Eucharist has never been more in media headlines and yet has never been more misunderstood and misrepresented. With 70% of Catholics disbelieving in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, we have, truly, a crisis of catechesis. We caught up with Monsignor Gerard O'Conner to talk about the Eucharist, the Sacred Liturgy and being a sacramental people. Monsignor has an ecclesiastical doctoral degree (STD) from San Anselmo in Rome and is the Director of the Office of Divine Worship. His thesis was on the liturgy found in the Missale Parisiense of 1738. (You can find an article about it here in chap. 5 of the [Divine Worship Newsletter](#)) He is also newly appointed as the new Rector of St. Mary's Cathedral.

When you got to Oregon, you were tasked by Archbishop Sample to create A Liturgical Handbook for all liturgical ministers, and you set about promulgating it. Since newly emerging from Covid, we find that you are the new rector of St. Mary's Cathedral. Tell me about the Archbishop's decision to give you this assignment and how has your role expanded?

Well, I continue to be the director of the Divine Worship office and it's not too difficult to keep that job going and be the Rector of the Cathedral during COVID. We've not been having any trainings in parishes, however, that will change very shortly as we will begin to schedule them. But being the rector of the Cathedral, as well, of course, is very exciting. The Cathedral is meant to be the example for all the liturgy throughout the diocese. The expectation is that the liturgy and especially the music ministry should be in conformity with the Archbishop's directives that he laid out in the [pastoral letter on music](#) as well as in the handbook.

In the recent USCCB meeting, the recent Pew study on belief in the Real Presence was mentioned several times. ([Seven in ten believe the bread and wine are symbolic](#)) Thus we have come to this realization that we have this crisis of catechesis. Speaking from your background in the liturgy, how can we marry both catechesis and liturgy? Liturgy is one chapter in most yearlong catechism programs - how do we begin to have liturgical catechesis?

I think a major part of this, is the *Ars Celebrandi*, which is the art of celebrating mass. It is very important priests to be able to celebrate mass according to the rubrics. But not just according to the rubrics but with the reverence that the holy Eucharist deserves. It is a necessary revered attitude, a solicitude towards the Blessing Sacrament and celebration of Holy Mass. If we do this in a sloppy manner, then a casual attitude towards liturgy gives people a casual belief. And sometimes it is the things we don't think about, how we genuflect, how we are around the altar, talking in church. Everyone needs to realize, all the time, that our church is our temple that contains The Living God and the Real Presence in the tabernacle.

Yes, I think someone said once: "Do what it says. Don't do what it doesn't say"; some have an easy time with the first part and a harder time with the last part. Then what would you say to the criticism that there's too much of an obsession over the rubrics and all that's really important is that you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

That's fine if you are an evangelical but we are a Sacramental people. We have 7 sacraments, and the Holy Eucharist is the most blessed Sacrament. Rubrics are like laws; they are there to protect us all. If you mess with the rubrics, then you are not really giving the people all they deserve. And it's dangerous, if you remember that case of [the priest who found out he wasn't really baptized](#). This is what happens when you get free and loose with the rubrics.

The USCCB is putting together a teaching document on the Eucharist and the latter part of it will focus on the role of the liturgy and family life, how do you see us living that eucharistic faith within our family.

I am a great believer in daily mass. It changed my life many years ago. Within about 18 months, I was in the seminary. I think it really helps family life to celebrate the riches of the liturgy and the readings every day and not just on Sundays. Sometimes it is difficult with parents working, etc, but there are many different times that are scheduled in different parishes. But everything in the family must stem from the mass on Sunday. Parents must be united in their approach. When one parent stays at home, that gives kids a mixed message. It's our duty to God to worship him in this way.

How can we get better at teaching the Real Presence?

The chief catechist of the parish is the priest and homilizing about the holy Eucharist is one of the most important things we can do. There was [a book by David Carlin](#) a while back and he said the problem with most churches is we get a homily that is all about how Jesus loves you and there will be kittens in Heaven. The people need to hear good theological treatments of the basics of our Catholic faith and one of them is the Eucharist. This is why we have so many problems with Catholics not believing what the church teaches about the Holy Eucharist. They don't hear anything about it and in addition, they see a sloppy liturgy. I'm a great believer in what we call the exposition homily, which may not have much to do with the readings of that week. It also may take a four-part series in consecutive weeks to address that particular subject. I did this a couple of weeks ago and an older gentleman came up to me saying "Oh I thought that's what we used to believe. I didn't think we believed that anymore" and I said "No, no, that's the Truth. It is what the Church has always believed". A good expositional treatise can be also be reinforced with adult education.

What are some good resources for Catechists and parishioners?

Anything from the Augustine Institute and the Formed website. [Lawrence Feingold](#) has really in depth look at the Eucharist, but that's a challenging one. [Abbott Jeremy Driscoll](#) has a classic little book which would be great for small group discussions.

With all the energy surrounding the USCCB meeting, do you think they will produce something we can use, and if so, will it change anything?

Yes, to both questions. It will focus on what it means to accept the teachings, how we celebrate the Liturgy, and what it means for our personal life. It will address how to be a Eucharistic people and what it means to have Eucharistic Integrity. People have preconceived notions, even people outside the Church, on what the Eucharist means. During Covid, there were people in ecumenical circles who understood how not being present affected our worship as a sacramental people. I am hoping that priests take the time over a period of weeks to explain the document thoroughly with some good practical take-aways that their parishioners and catechists can integrate into their lives and teachings.

Monsignor O'Conner will be setting up dates for parishes to have liturgical training but is available to speak on other topics as well. You can reach him at the Cathedral.





A Prayer Before Mass

Almighty and ever-living God, I approach the sacrament of Your only begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, I come sick to the doctor of life, unclean to the fountain of mercy, blind to the radiance of eternal light, and poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth. Lord, in your great generosity, heal my sickness, wash away my defilement, enlighten my blindness, enrich my poverty, and clothe my nakedness. May I receive the bread of angels, the King of kings and Lord of lords, with humble reverence, with the purity and faith, the repentance and love, and the determined purpose that will help to bring me to salvation. May I receive the sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood, and its reality and power. Kind God, may I receive the Body of Your only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, born from the womb of the Virgin Mary, and so be received into His mystical body and numbered among His members. Loving Father, as on my earthly pilgrimage I now receive Your beloved Son under the veil of a sacrament may I one day see him face to face in glory, who lives and reigns with You forever. Amen.

St. Thomas Aquinas