

Catechesis for Eucharist

National Directory for Catechesis, USCCB, 2006

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is one of the sacraments of 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.”

The Eucharist is the ritual, sacramental action of giving thanks and praise to the Father. It is the sacrificial memorial of Christ and his body, the Church, and is the continuing presence of Christ in his Word and in his Spirit.

In the Mass, or “the Divine Liturgy” as it is termed in the Eastern Catholic Churches, the Eucharist constitutes the principal liturgical celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ and the ritual memorial of our communion in that mystery. Acting through the ministry of the priests, the bread and wine become—through Transubstantiation—Christ himself. Christ offers the Eucharistic sacrifice and is really present under the species of bread and wine.

Since the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life” catechesis for the Eucharist recognizes it as the heart of Christian life for the whole Church, for the dioceses and parishes, and for each individual Christian. Dioceses and parishes should present lifelong catechesis for the Eucharist that

- Helps people understand that the Eucharist is the mystery in which Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is perpetuated; that it is a memorial of Christ’s passion, death, and Resurrection; and that it is a sacred banquet in which the People of God share the benefits of the Paschal Mystery, renew the covenant that God has made through the blood of Christ, and anticipate the heavenly banquet
- Helps people understand that the work of salvation accomplished by these events is made present by the liturgical action that Christ himself offers in every celebration of the Eucharist
- Teaches that through the priest— the other Christ— the bread and wine are transformed, through the Eucharistic Prayer, into the Body and Blood of Christ
- Includes instruction that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ, his real presence under the appearances of bread and wine, and that the Eucharist nourishes the body of Christ, the Church, and each individual communicant
- Teaches that Christ is present whole and entire, God and man, substantially and permanently, and in a unique way under the species of bread and wine
- Teaches that Christ is also present in his word, in the body of the faithful gathered in his name, and in the person of the priest who acts in the person of Christ, the Head of his Body, the Church
- Includes the effects of the sacrament: unity in the Body of Christ and provision of spiritual food for the Christian’s journey through life
- Teaches that the reception of the body and Blood of Christ signifies and effects communion with the most Holy Trinity, forgives venial sins, and, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, helps the communicant to avoid mortal sin

- Helps the People of God to understand that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist forms the Church
- Helps the faithful to understand that, in the Eucharist, “Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all on the cross to his Father”
- Gives instruction about the meaning of the ritual, symbols, and parts of the Mass
- Presents the Jewish roots of the Last Supper as the renewal of God’s covenant with his people in the blood of his beloved Son
- Teaches that essential signs of the Eucharistic sacrament are bread and wine, on which the power of the Holy Spirit is invoked and over which the priest pronounces the words of consecration spoken first by Jesus during the Last Supper
- Teaches that the “bread and wine are changed, a change traditionally and appropriately expressed by the word “Transubstantiation,” so that, while the appearances of bread and wine remain, the reality is the Body of Christ”
- Teaches that the Eucharist commits those who receive it to serve the poor
- Reminds the faithful that the Sacraments of the Eucharist is the preeminent sign of the unity of the Church
- Teaches that the Eucharist is an effective sign of the unity of all Christians and that one day- that is, the Parousia- by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the divisions that separate Christians will be healed
- Presents the guidelines for Eucharistic sharing that have been set forth by the United States Catholic bishops
- Considers the mystery of the Eucharist in all its fullness and consequently teaches that the celebration of the Eucharist in the sacrifice of the Mass is the origin and consummation of the worship shown the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass
- Encourages visits to the Blessed Sacrament and other Eucharistic devotions, and teaches appropriate devotional gestures, postures, and proper conduct in church
- Includes instruction on the implications of the Eucharist for the Church’s mission in the world and for social justice
- Clarifies the roles and ministries within the sacred action so that all may experience full, active, and conscious participation in the celebration of the Mass
- Includes an explanation of the theology and practice of celebrating the Eucharist in the Eastern Churches
- Makes people aware of their obligation to be free of mortal sin before receiving Holy Communion
- Teaches that Catholics must receive Holy Communion at least once a year during the Easter season
- Recommends that the faithful receive Holy Communion when they participate in the celebration of the Eucharist
- Instructs the faithful concerning the Eucharist fast and the conditions under which Holy Communion may be received a second time on the same day
- Instructs the faithful that we are called to realize that we become what we receive- which has great implications for how we live and act