

# ***Parent Session 9:*** **What Catholics Believe** **About the Eucharist**

## **Where are we at Mass?**

- ◆ *“You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of the just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:22-24)*

## **Prayer Before Mass**

Receive, O Holy Trinity, One God,  
this Holy Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
which I, your unworthy servant, desire now to offer to your Divine Majesty  
by the hands of your minister,  
with all the sacrifices which have ever been or will be offered to you,  
in union with that most holy sacrifice offered by the same Christ our Lord  
at the Last Supper, and on the Altar of the Cross.  
I offer it to you with the utmost affection of devotion,  
out of pure love for your infinite goodness,  
and according to the most holy intention of the same Christ our Lord,  
and of our Holy Mother, the Church.  
O God, almighty and merciful, grant us through this Holy Sacrifice,  
joy and peace, a better life, time to do penance,  
grace and consolation of the Holy Spirit, and perseverance in good works. Amen.

## **Opening Thought Starter:**

How would you complete the following statements?

- ◆ *Something I was thankful for today...*
- ◆ *Something that happened in my life that I remember most every day...*
- ◆ *A sacrifice I willingly made or am making...*
- ◆ *What makes a meal into a banquet/feast...*
- ◆ *A time I truly felt Christ's presence in my life...*

**St. Paul’s Instruction on the Eucharist: I Corinthians 11:23-29**

“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.”

What words or images or phrases help explain what Catholics believe about the Eucharist?

***TO REVIEW***

**The Eucharist is a Sacrament**

- ◆ A visible sign of God’s invisible grace
- ◆ Taking place in a celebration of the People of God
- ◆ Through the power and action of the Holy Spirit, mediated by a priest of Jesus Christ

**The Eucharist is a Sacrament of Initiation**

- ◆ Baptism, Confirmation & Eucharist
- ◆ Sacraments of Initiation teach us our true, God-given identity by answering the questions: ***Who am I? What am I Good For? Where am I Going?***

**The Eucharist helps us know who we are:**

- ◆ ***Where am I going? To Heaven***
- ◆ ***How will we get there? Led and Fed by Jesus Christ***



**The Seven Sacraments**

<b>Sacraments of Initiation</b>	<b>Sacraments of Healing</b>	<b>Sacraments of Vocation</b>
<b><i>Baptism Confirmation Eucharist</i></b>	<b><i>Penance (Reconciliation) Anointing of the Sick</i></b>	<b><i>Holy Orders Matrimony</i></b>

# Understanding Catholic Doctrine on the Eucharist

## **5 Keys**

- 1. Thanksgiving**
- 2. Memorial**
- 3. Sacrifice**
- 4. Banquet**
- 5. Real Presence**



### **The First Key: The Eucharist is Thanksgiving**

- ◆ The word “Eucharist” means ‘to give thanks;’ from the Greek word, *eucharistia*
- ◆ “pray constantly, and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess 5:18)

#### ***When did Jesus give thanks?***

- ◆ At the return of the 72 disciples
- ◆ At the miracle of the loaves
- ◆ At the tomb of Lazarus
- ◆ At the Last Supper



#### ***We offer thanks to God for all He...***

- ◆ Has done (creation, redemption)
- ◆ Is doing (sanctification)
- ◆ Will do (salvation)

#### ***Whom do we thank?***

- ◆ We offer thanks to the Father, in union with the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit
- ◆ “Always and everywhere give thanks to God who is our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph 5:20)

### **The Second Key: The Eucharist is a Memorial**

- ◆ A memorial does not merely recall something that happened
- ◆ A memorial proclaims what God has done and continues to do for us
- ◆ A memorial gives us the chance to enter into the effects of a great event of our faith

#### ***The Eucharist is a memorial of Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection***

- ◆ In the Mass, Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and His victory over sin and death remain ever present, ever effective, ever accessible for all generations

#### ***We repeat the celebration of a memorial***

- ◆ We do not repeat the event itself, but make that event accessible to us in our time and place
- ◆ The ritual of a memorial, and its repetition, help conform our hearts and lives to the impact of the event we memorialize

### **Third Key: The Eucharist is a sacrifice**

- ◆ “Sacrifice” literally means to declare something holy, to offer a holy thing
- ◆ A sacrifice is an offering of a tangible thing to God in order to acknowledge His lordship and to demonstrate our obedience

#### ***Jesus’ Sacrifice on the cross***

- ◆ Jesus is **both high priest and victim** (the one who offers and the one who is offered up)
- ◆ Jesus’ sacrifice is **substitutional**—He offers himself for our sake
- ◆ Jesus’ sacrifice is one of **atonement and petition** to the Father
- ◆ Jesus’ sacrifice is an act of **worship and obedience**, given freely in **love**

#### ***Jesus’ once-for-all Sacrifice***

- ◆ “There is neither past nor present nor future for Jesus Christ. [He] knew us all at the Last Supper. He consecrated, as it were in thought and desire, all our Hosts; He loved us personally ... centuries before we were born. Yes, we were present at the Last Supper.”  
(*St. Peter Julian Eymard*)

### **Fourth Key: The Eucharist is a Banquet**

- ◆ A banquet is a meal that unites people in sharing celebration, joy, unity and life; to share food, time and home with someone is to be in ‘communion’ with them
- ◆ In Jesus’ time, sharing a meal with someone meant entering into a relationship with them---taking on the responsibility to care for them, protect them, and treat them as family

#### ***Jesus eating with people...***

- ◆ Ate with sinners and non-Jews
- ◆ Fed people who had nothing to eat
- ◆ Ate with those who were plotting to kill Him
- ◆ Ate with His Apostles before and after His resurrection
- ◆ Celebrated Passover and other religious meals
- ◆ Gave Himself to us as spiritual food and drink



#### ***The wedding feast...***

- ◆ The banquet of the Eucharist foreshadows the wedding feast of the Lamb in heaven—the celebration in God’s kingdom that will never end! It’s a wedding feast because it celebrates the perfect union of God and His people
- ◆ The Eucharist is our ‘appetizer course’ that prepares us for this heavenly banquet

#### ***Our role as guests:***

- ◆ We are one body, the People of God, a royal priesthood—a people made one by sharing in the Communion of Christ’s Body and Blood
- ◆ “They are to shun any appearance of individualism or division, keeping before their eyes that they have only one Father in heaven and accordingly are all brothers and sisters to each other. Indeed, they form one body.” (GIRM, #95-96)

## **Fifth Key: Real Presence of Jesus Christ**

- ◆ “Do not, therefore, regard the bread and wine as simply that, for they are, according to the Master’s declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the Body and Blood of Christ.” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

### ***Our Doctrine states:***

- ◆ “The body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, the whole Christ, is truly, really and substantially contained in the Eucharist.”

### ***Transubstantiation: the term we use to describe the Real Presence***

- ◆ The term used to describe the unique change of the Eucharistic bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ
- ◆ The term is from the scholastic school of philosophy and has been in use in doctrinal definitions of the Eucharist for the past thousand years

### ***What are we attempting to describe?***

- ◆ An unseen, permanent change to a physical thing
- ◆ *Physical things have two properties:*
  - (1) Their ACCIDENTS: the physical characteristics or qualities of a thing (appearance)
  - (2) Their SUBSTANCE: the nature of a thing, what kind of a thing it is (reality)

## ***What possible kinds of changes are there to objects?***

	<b>Accidents (Appearance) Changes</b>	<b>Accidents (Appearance) Does NOT Change</b>
<b>Substance (Reality) Changes</b>	Decomposition	Supernatural Change
<b>Substance (Reality) does NOT Change</b>	Growth or Maturation	Persistence/Stability

### ***Examples of kinds of changes:***

- ◆ Decomposition: a leaf falling to the ground and decomposing into soil
- ◆ Growth: a human baby growing to maturity
- ◆ Persistence/Stability: a rock sitting on the floor of the valley
- ◆ Supernatural Change: the bread and wine changing into the body and blood of Jesus

### ***So transubstantiation is...***

- ◆ “Through the consecration of the bread and wine there occurs the change of the entire substance of the bread into the substance of the Body of Christ, and of the entire substance of the wine into the blood of Christ—even though the appearances of the bread and wine remain.”

### ***How does this change occur?***

- ◆ Through the words spoken by Jesus Christ, spoken by an ordained priest/bishop
- ◆ We cannot explain it or detect it with ‘natural’ or ‘scientific’ methods

- ◆ The change occurs through the power of the Holy Spirit—it is a change humans cannot cause, although the priest is the instrument or means of God’s power

**Why does this change occur?**

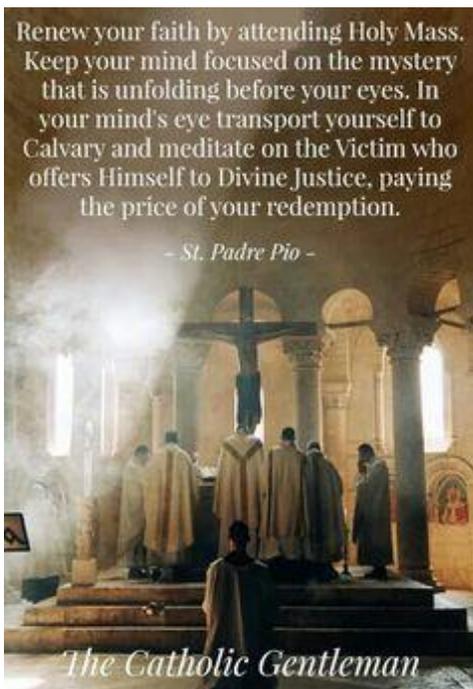
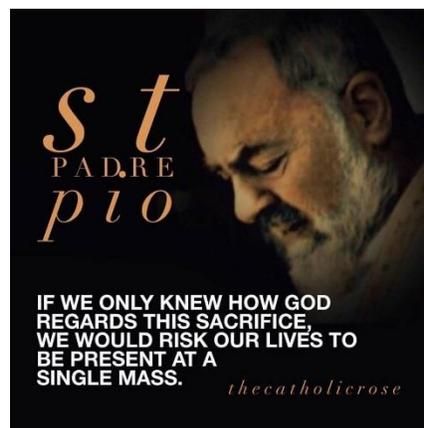
- ◆ Out of love for us!
- ◆ “In the Eucharist, Jesus is drawing us toward Him, inside His mystery, through which He wants to transform us like He transformed the host from being simple bread into the body of the divine.” (Pope Benedict XVI, 6/15/06)
- ◆ “Jesus did not merely say, ‘This is my body,’ ‘This is my blood,’ but went on to add: ‘which is given for you,’ ‘which is poured out for you.’ (Lk 22:19-20) Jesus did not simply state that what he was giving them to eat and drink was his body and his blood; he also expressed its sacrificial meaning and made sacramentally present his sacrifice which would soon be offered on the Cross for the salvation of all.”

*(Pope John Paul II, On The Eucharist, paragraph #12)*

**We Receive Eucharist at Mass:**

- ◆ “To me nothing is more consoling, so piercing, so thrilling, so overcoming, as the Mass. ... It is not a mere form of words—it is a great action, the greatest action that can be on earth.”

*St. John Henry Cardinal Newman*



“The Eucharist is far more than just a meal; *it has cost a death to provide it*, and the majesty of death is present in it. Whenever we hold it, we should be *filled with reverence in the face of this mystery*, with awe in the face of this mysterious death that becomes a present reality in our midst. Certainly, the overcoming of this death in the Resurrection is present at the same time, and we can therefore *celebrate this death as the feast of life*, as the transformation of the world.”

*Pope Benedict XVI, God is Near Us*

## **Why is the Mass and the Eucharist so central to Catholicism?**

*In David Athey's novel Christopher, one character writes an email to the main character in hopes of encouraging him to return to the Church and to be prepared to receive Holy Communion:*

“Despite all the damage done by sinners in the Church, the Mass is the hope of civilization. The Mass is the pinnacle of philosophy. Our minds approach the Holy Gifts in fear of God, the beginning of wisdom. Our hearts accept the Holy Gifts in love of God, the end of wisdom. The Divine Liturgy is the epitome of language and poetry. It is the most powerful form of drama, a play that appears to descend into tragedy, yet ends in the height of heavenly bliss. The Mass is housed in the most glorious architecture ever constructed. Not all churches are grand, but the world has been given the supreme cathedrals to remind us of the majesty of the Maker, who appears on the altars. The Divine Liturgy is the grand unified theory of physics. Beyond all the quarks, multiple dimensions, and dark matter is the greatest gift to science: Transubstantiation. The Mass is the quintessence of agriculture—the simple fruits of the earth transformed into spiritual nutrition. The Mass is the bloodline of the best art. From icons to stained glass to mosaics to statuary to all the variations of paintings, the Sacrifice enlivens creativity. The Divine Liturgy is a perfect education. It is reality. We kneel. We bow. We give up our rebellions and embrace the hierarchy of the created order. We submit to every demand of Love. The Mass gives voice to the music of angels, the chant of nine choirs and seven heavens. It culminates in the most noble act of physicality. We accept into our bodies the Creator of all flesh, in whom we live and dance and have our being. The Mass is the most personal relationship that one can have with God. The Mass is the most heavenly occurrence on earth, and the most viciously attacked—from within the Church and without. The Mass has produced the humble, superhuman saints, multitudes of heroic men and women, from the beginning of the Church to the end, miracle workers from every walk of life—patrons for every holy passion. The Divine Liturgy of Heaven gathers the most purposeful community in the world, the assembly of Communicants. Beyond the goodness of human friendship, the friends of Heaven are perfected in the Feast. The Mass makes life worth living. It is the gateway out of our self-inflicted pain, to fully enter into the death and resurrection of Christ. Will you, in the name of Love, become a Communicant?”

*Christopher: A Novel by David Athey (Sophia Institute Press, 2011)*

## **Questions that might come up about the Eucharist**

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*These are all questions I have been asked by children or adults who are preparing for the Sacraments. If you aren't sure how to answer them, be sure to ask:*

1. HOW does that bread and wine become Jesus Christ?
2. If the bread and wine tastes and looks the same after the consecration as before, how can we believe it is truly the body and blood of Christ?
3. My friend who goes to another church says that the bread and wine are symbols of Jesus' love and sacrifice. They do not believe that Jesus is really present in the bread and wine. Why do Catholics believe that Communion is more than a symbol and that it is really Jesus' Body and Blood?
4. My friend who goes to another church says that our actions at the Mass mean we are trying to offer another sacrifice to God. She says the Bible tells us that Jesus only had to die once for all time, so the sacrifice of the Mass is not necessary. Are Catholics trying to add anything to Jesus' sacrifice?
5. We believe that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Does that mean that when we receive Eucharist we are being cannibals?
6. If I am given a broken communion wafer, do I get only part of Jesus? If I don't receive from the chalice, do I only get some of Jesus?
7. Why do we have to go to Mass every week? If communion gives us Jesus, why do we have to keep going back for more?
8. Sometimes I don't get any strong feelings from receiving Communion. How do I know that receiving Communion really gives me Jesus when it doesn't seem to change me or I don't feel any different?
9. How come our non-Catholic family members and friends are not allowed to receive Holy Communion? Would it be all right if they say they believe it is really Jesus that they are receiving?
10. Would communion be any stronger if I received it from the pope?

# Addressing Your Child's Questions About the Eucharist

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*Seven hints about answering questions about our faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist*

**1.** **The HOW of the Sacrament is a mystery.** A mystery of our faith is something that is beyond our understanding. It cannot be fully explained. It's not like a magic trick that has a "secret" explanation. We don't understand HOW Jesus is present in the signs of the Eucharist. But Jesus told us that the bread and wine change and become His body and blood—and we believe that what Jesus says is true. (be sure to read one of the accounts of the Last Supper in the Bible with your child) Jesus is truly the Son of God. His words have the power to do anything Jesus wants—and Jesus wants to give us the Eucharist so that we can share in the victory He won for us on the cross. We don't make a "new" sacrifice to God, but the Mass brings us to the eternal moment of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.

**2.** Jesus offers His real Body and Blood in the Eucharist, but we are not eating a part of a dead body of someone we killed. **Jesus is present risen, glorified, and living.** He offers Himself to us in the Eucharist completely. We don't receive a part of Jesus when we receive Eucharist. We receive Him complete and whole and living. Communion is a way Jesus shares Himself with every believer, but we don't divide up Jesus. Every piece of the consecrated communion wafer and every drop of the Precious Blood contains Jesus whole and entire.

When the priest prays the Words of Consecration, **the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.** They may still look like bread and wine, **3.** but the reality of what they are has changed completely. The bread and wine aren't symbols of Jesus. What still looks like bread and wine are no longer bread and wine—they are the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. We have to trust in Jesus' words and His power, not in what we see. Sometimes what we see doesn't help us understand what's real. This is true about some natural things (for example, the sun doesn't "rise" and "set" even though that's what we see). This is often true about supernatural things—we can't usually see them with our bodily eyes.

Jesus gives Himself to us a food so that **we can receive Jesus in a personal and intimate way.** He can change us from the inside out! When we eat natural food, the **4.** food changes into our body. When we eat supernatural food, that *food changes us* into

it! As we consume Jesus, we are brought into the Body of Christ and become more like Jesus. It is a supernatural truth that “we are what we eat.” When we were unborn babies, we were nourished in our mother’s womb by her body and blood. As Christians in the world, we are fed by Jesus’s Body until we are ‘born’ into heaven. We don’t often “sense” the changes that happen in our bodies—both natural and supernatural changes—right away. But we can trust that the grace God gives us will help us become saints. God is patient with us and He usually changes us gradually, in tiny steps, so that we don’t get overwhelmed.

Jesus offers Himself as **real food for our souls so that we can be nourished and strengthened**. **5.** We have to eat healthy food every day, not just once and a while, to have enough energy and strength to do all the things we want to do. If we don’t have good spiritual food, our souls grow weak and sickly. We don’t have the energy or power to love God and others. The Eucharist is our “daily bread” that helps us journey all the way to heaven. Jesus knows we need His help all the time—this is why we go to Mass every week (or even daily).

The phrase “**the Body of Christ**” **can be used in two ways**. It points to the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. It also describes the Church we belong to. **6.** The Church is the mystical Body of Christ. This “double meaning” is not an accident! Receiving the Body of Christ in the Eucharist helps unite us to the mystical Body of Christ, the Church. When we unite ourselves to Jesus in the Eucharist, we also unite ourselves to His Body, the Church. This is why the Eucharist can only be received by Catholics who are prepared to receive Jesus—our Holy Communion is a sign that we belong to the Catholic Church.

When we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, **we receive the same Jesus** who calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee. The same Jesus who healed the sick, raised the dead, and drove out demons. The same Jesus who died on the cross for us and rose from dead. We receive the same Jesus that St. Augustine received in the 400’s. The same Jesus that St. Francis and St. Clare received in the 1200’s. The same Jesus that Mother Teresa received 30 years ago. Jesus comes to His people in every age and in every place at every Mass. **Every Mass renews the Covenant Jesus made with us. And at every Mass we promise to live by that covenant.** **7.**

## The Eucharist and the Bible: Scriptural Foundations for our Beliefs

### *Institution Narratives (Story of the Last Supper)*

<b>1 Cor 11:23-26</b>	<b>Mt 26:26-29</b>	<b>Mk 14:22-25</b>	<b>Luke 22:19-20</b>	<b>Jn 6, 13-17, 19</b>
<p><sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup>and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."</p> <p><sup>25</sup>In the same way also the chalice, after supper, saying, "This chalice is the new covenant in my blood. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.</p>	<p><sup>26</sup>Now as they were eating, Jesus took break, blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat, this is my body."</p> <p><sup>27</sup>And he took a chalice, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; <sup>28</sup>for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup>I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."</p>	<p><sup>22</sup>And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take, this is my body."</p> <p><sup>23</sup>And he took a chalice, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it.</p> <p><sup>24</sup>And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. <sup>25</sup>Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."</p>	<p><sup>19</sup>And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."</p> <p><sup>20</sup>And likewise the chalice after supper, saying, "This chalice which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."</p>	<p>John does not have a similar account of the Institution of the Eucharist.</p> <p>Jesus' Last Supper Discourse and prayer are recorded in chapters 13-17 of John's Gospel.</p> <p>Jesus' teaching on the Real Presence of the Eucharist comes in chapter 6.</p> <p>The account of the Crucifixion includes the detail of the blood and water pouring from the side of Jesus.</p>

***Additional New Testament Stories that Point to the Eucharist:***

- The Miracle of the Loaves (Mt 14:31-44 & 15:29-38; Mk 6:13-21 & 8:1-19; Lk 9:10-17; John 6:1-15)
- The Wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1-11)
- Jesus eating meals during His public ministry (Mt 9:10-13; Mk 2:13-17; Lk 5:27-32)
- The Emmaus Journey (Lk 24:13-35)
- Other Resurrection Meals (Mk 16:14-20; Jn 21:1-23)
- Accounts of the Early Church (Acts 2:42; 20:7)
- St. Paul's instructions about the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:17-29)
- Book of Revelation's visions of the wedding banquet (3:20; 19:3)

***Old Testament Stories that Prepare us for the Sign of the Eucharist***

- The Fruit of the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:15, 22-24)
- The Sacrifice of Abel (Genesis 4:4)
- The Sacrifice of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17-20)
- The Sacrifice of Abraham (Genesis 22:1-19)
- The Passover (Exodus 12:1-28, 43-51; 13:3-10)
- Manna in the Desert (Exodus 16:1-35; Deuteronomy 8:1-3)
- Feasting as the Ark is brought to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:12-19)
- Elijah's Flight to Mt. Sinai (1 Kings 19:4-16)
- The Banquet on the Lord's Mountain (Isaiah 25:6-10)

***Highly Recommended Books (you can also find audio presentations of these books on Formed)***

- Scott Hahn's The Lamb's Supper and The Fourth Cup
- Brant Pitre's The Jewish Roots of the Eucharist and Jesus the Bridegroom