

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 (St. Thomas Aquinas)

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.”

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?*

Where Am I Going?

The Eucharist answers:

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

The Seven Sacraments

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

5 Keys to Understanding Catholic Doctrine on the Eucharist:

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



Understanding Catholic Doctrine on the Eucharist

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?

- ◆ Our thanks is offered 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 (their 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?

	Accidents (Appearance) Changes	Accidents (Appearance) Does NOT Change
Substance (Reality) Changes	Decomposition	Supernatural Change
Substance (Reality) does NOT Change	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
- ◆ 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

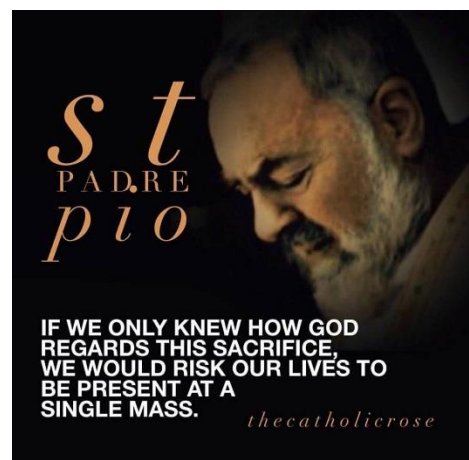
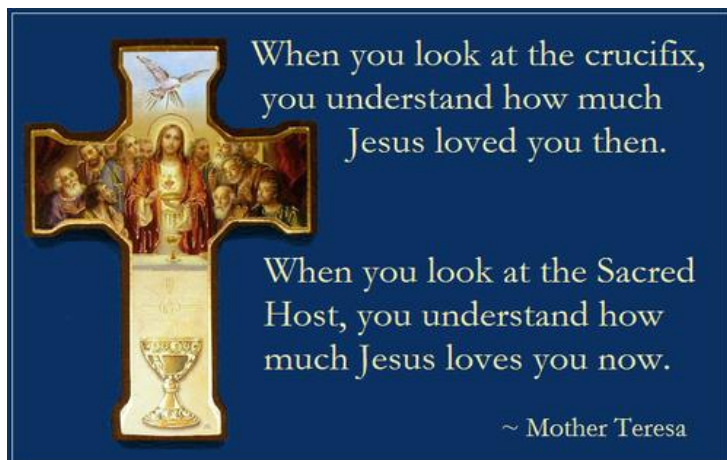
Why does this change occur?

- ◆ 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 the 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



Addressing Questions that might come up about the Eucharist

These are all questions I have been asked by children or adults who are preparing for the Sacraments.

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?

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

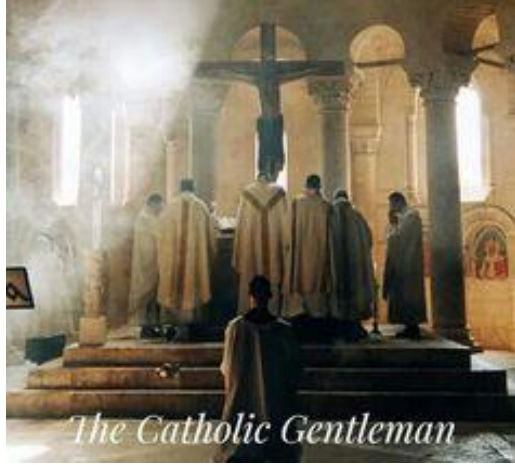
In David Athey's novel Christopher, a good friend of the main character writes an email to him in hopes of encouraging him to return to the Church and to be prepared to receive Holy Communion:

“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)

Renew your faith by attending Holy Mass. Keep your mind focused on the mystery that is unfolding before your eyes. In your mind's eye transport yourself to Calvary and meditate on the Victim who offers Himself to Divine Justice, paying the price of your redemption.

- St. Padre Pio -




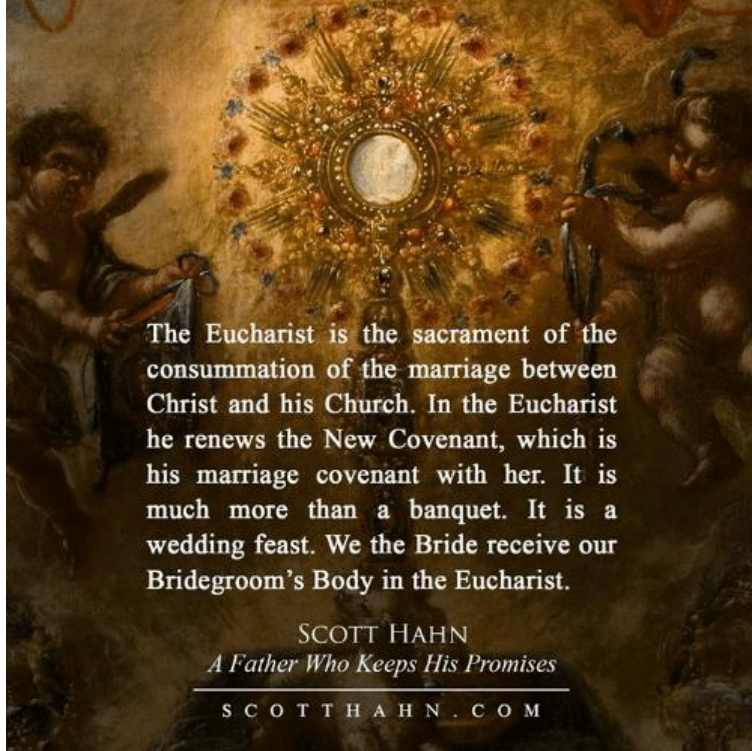
The Catholic Gentleman



"When you have received Holy Communion, close your bodily eyes so that you may open the eyes of your soul. Then look upon Jesus in the center of your heart."

- St. Teresa of Avila


 **MEN LIVING FOR GREATNESS**



The Eucharist is the sacrament of the consummation of the marriage between Christ and his Church. In the Eucharist he renews the New Covenant, which is his marriage covenant with her. It is much more than a banquet. It is a wedding feast. We the Bride receive our Bridegroom's Body in the Eucharist.

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Let the whole world of mankind tremble
 the whole world shake
 and the heavens exult when Christ, the Son of the living God, is on the altar in the hands of a priest!



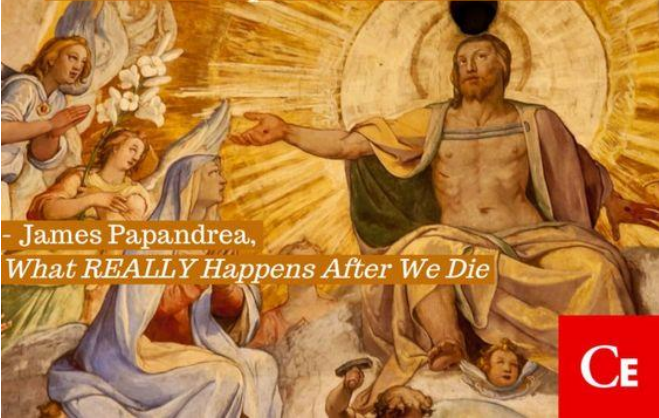
St. Francis of Assisi
 facebook, Adoremus in Aeternum, a Catholic Gathering

6 ways to get the most out of Mass

- Be on time!**
Arrive at least 10 minutes before it starts to dial down your mind.
- Mother Church wants YOU**
Help out if you can! (As a lector, usher, altar server, etc.)
- Sing...even if you're out of tune**
Don't worry if you have no talent for singing; most people don't.
- Pray Business Class**
Sit near the altar. It will help you pay attention.
- Give God your full attention**
Isn't it fair that we spend one hour each week worshipping God?
- Call your Mother**
Ask Mary to intercede for you during Mass. Pray to her for guidance and strength.

CatholicLink

“The body of Christ that hung on the Cross *is* the body of Christ that rose from the tomb, *is* the body of Christ that ascended to the Father, and *is* the Body of Christ that is presented on the altar.”



- James Papandrea,
What REALLY Happens After We Die

