

## Church Statements on the Eucharist

### **The Presence of Christ**

Christ is present in the liturgy in the following ways:

- In the assembly
- In the minister
- In the Word of God, esp. the Gospel
- In the action of the celebration
- In the Eucharistic species (*par excellence*)

(from *Sacrosanctum Concilium* – “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy”, 1963, #7)

### **Priesthood**

The liturgy, then, is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ.... In it full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. (SC, #7)

Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less ordered one to another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power that he has, forms and rules the priestly people; in the person of Christ he effects the Eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people. The faithful, indeed, by virtue of their royal priesthood, participate in the offering of the Eucharist. They exercise that priesthood, too, by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, abnegation and active charity. (*Lumen Gentium* – “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”, 1964 – #10)

### **Participation**

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people ... have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism. (SC, #14)

The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's word, and be nourished at the table of the Lord's Body. They should give thanks to God. Offering the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn to offer themselves. Through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other, so that finally God may be all in all. (SC, #48)

### **Who Offers What?**

Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the source and summit of the Christian life, they offer the divine victim to God and themselves along with it.... Then, strengthened by the body of Christ in the Eucharistic communion, they manifest in a concrete way that unity of the People of God which this holy sacrament aptly signifies and admirably realizes. (LG, #11)

For the celebration of the Eucharist is an action of the whole Church.... For this people is the People of God, purchased by Christ's blood, gathered together by the Lord, nourished by his word. It is a people called to bring to God the prayers of the entire human family, a people giving thanks in Christ for the mystery of salvation by offering his Sacrifice. Finally, they are a people growing together into unity by sharing in Christ's body and blood. (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* – 2010 – Introduction, #5)

The Church, spouse and minister of Christ, performs together with him the role of priest and victim, offers him to the Father and at the same time makes a total offering of herself together with him. (*Eucharisticum Mysterium* – “Instruction on Eucharistic Worship”, 1967 – #3c)

For all [the laity's] works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit—indeed even the hardships of life if patiently borne—all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist these may be most fittingly offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. And so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God. (LG #34)

## **Participation in the Paschal Mystery**

Thus by Baptism men and women are grafted into the paschal mystery of Christ; they die with him, are buried with him, and rise with him. They receive the spirit of adoption as sons and daughters “in which we cry Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15) and thus become true adorers such as the Father seeks.... From [the time of Pentecost] onward the Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery, reading those things “which were in all the scriptures concerning him” (Lk 24:27), celebrating the Eucharist in which “the victory and triumph of his death are again made present” [Council of Trent], and at the same time “giving thanks to God for his inexpressible gift” (2 Cor 9:15) in Christ Jesus, “in praise of his glory” (Eph 1:12) through the power of the Holy Spirit. (SC, #6)

At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. (SC, #47)

[I]n the sacrifice of the Mass they [priests] make present again and apply, until the coming of the Lord, the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, that namely of Christ offering himself once for all a spotless victim to the Father. (LG, #28)

## **Office and Function of the People of God at Mass**

In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a people of God's own possession and a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the unblemished sacrificial Victim not only by means of the hands of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer their very selves. They should, moreover, take care to show this by their deep religious sense and their charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration.

They are consequently to avoid any appearance of singularity or division, keeping in mind that they have only one Father in heaven and that hence are all brothers and sisters one to the other.

Moreover, they are to form one body, whether in hearing the word of God, or by taking part in the prayers and singing, or above all by the common offering of the Sacrifice and by participating together at the Lord's table. This unity is beautifully apparent from the gestures and bodily postures observed together by the faithful.

The faithful, moreover, should not refuse to serve the People of God in gladness whenever they are asked to perform some particular service or function in the celebration (GIRM #'s 95-97).

## **Centrality of the Eucharist**

[T]he liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows. (SC, #10)

In [the celebration of Mass] is found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit.... As to the other sacred actions and all the activities of the Christian life, these are bound up with it, flow from it, and are ordered to it. (GIRM, #16)

## The Purpose of the Eucharist

The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men and women, to build up the Body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God. Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it... They do, indeed, confer grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them most effectively disposes the faithful to receive this grace to their profit, to worship God duly, and to practice charity. (SC, #59)

In each altar community, under the sacred ministry of the bishop, a manifest symbol is to be seen of that charity and “unity of the mystical body, without which there can be no salvation.” [St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III] In these communities, though they may often be small and poor, or dispersed, Christ is present through whose power and influence the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is constituted. For “the sharing of the body and blood of Christ has no other effect than to accomplish our transformation into that which we receive.” [St. Leo the Great] (LG, #26)

### St. Thomas Aquinas

<i>Sacramentum</i> of the Eucharist:	The consecrated bread and wine
<i>Res et Sacramentum</i> :	The real presence of Christ
<i>Res</i> :	The unity of the mystical Body of Christ

*Sacramentum* (Latin “oath” or “solemn promise”) = sign pointing to a deeper reality

*Res* (Latin “thing”) = the underlying reality

We receive the Body of Christ in Holy Communion in order to become ever more the Body of Christ in the world. Heaven unites with earth and the Kingdom of God becomes ever-more present.

St. Augustine on the Eucharist

That bread which you see on the altar, consecrated by the word of God, is the Body of Christ. That chalice, or rather, what the chalice holds, consecrated by the word of God, is the Blood of Christ. Through those accidents the Lord wished to entrust to us his body and blood which he poured out for the remission of sins. If you have received worthily, you are what you have received, for the Apostle says: “The bread is one, we though many, are one body.” So by bread you are instructed as to how you ought to cherish unity. (Sermon 227)

Brothers and sisters, these things are called sacraments because in them the appearance is one thing but the reality is another.... What appears to the senses is one thing, a material object, but what is grasped by the mind is a spiritual grace. If you wish then to grasp the body of Christ hear the words of the Apostle to the faithful: “You are the body of Christ and his members” (1 Cor 12:27). If then you are the body of Christ and his members, it is your sacrament that reposes on the altar of the Lord. It is your sacrament which you receive. You answer “Amen” to the words “The body of Christ.” Be, then, a member of the body of Christ to verify your “Amen”....

Be what you see, and receive what you are. (Sermon 272)

Because he suffered for us, He left us in this Sacrament His Body and Blood which he made even as He made us, also. For we have become His Body, and through his mercy we are what we receive....

There you are on the table, and there you are in the chalice, for you are one with us. We receive His Body together, and we drink His Blood together because we live together. (Sermon 229)

From a treatise, On the Kingdom of Jesus, by St. John Eudes, priest

The Son of God wills to give us a share in his mysteries and somehow extend them to us. He wills to continue them in us and in his universal Church. This is brought about first through the graces he has resolved to impart to us and then through the works he wishes to accomplish in us through these mysteries....

He desires us to perfect the mystery of his incarnation and birth by forming himself in us and being reborn in our souls through the blessed sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist....

He intends to perfect the mysteries of his passion, death, and resurrection, by causing us to suffer, die, and rise again with him and in him.

## Some terms

TRANSUBSTANTIATION: The “substance” of the bread and wine is transformed, while the “accidents” (e.g., taste, smell, texture) remain the same.

CONCOMITANCE: Christ is fully present – body, blood, soul, and divinity – under both species of bread and wine.

EPICLESIS: The invocation of the Holy Spirit during the Eucharistic Prayer: the “consecratory” epiclesis asks that the Spirit transform the gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ; the “communion” epiclesis asks that the Spirit unite us as one Body in Christ through the reception of Holy Communion.

### Example: Eucharistic Prayer II

#### *Consecratory Epiclesis:*

“Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

#### *Communion Epiclesis:*

“Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.”

In other words, the gifts of bread and wine are transformed so that *we* might be transformed.

So what is actually placed on the altar and consecrated?

### **Acting as a public minister of the Church**

As a liturgical minister, then, you *represent* and *serve* the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. Everything you do at church must be oriented toward this goal. In addition, your lives must therefore be of high moral character, and you must avoid anything which might be divisive or cause scandal to the faithful.

In addition, as a member of the priestly People of God, you are called to bring the Gospel to the world. Your service in church is a sign of your service to others in the rest of your life. Just as in the Eucharist we offer ourselves with Christ to God the Father for the sake of our brothers and sisters, so are we to make of our entire lives an offering for the salvation of the world.

## **The Order of Mass: An Overview**

### **Introductory Rites**

“The rites that precede the Liturgy of the Word, namely, the Entrance, the Greeting, the Penitential Act, the *Kyrie*, the *Gloria in excelsis* ... and the Collect, have the character of a beginning, an introduction, and a preparation.

“Their purpose is to ensure that the faithful who come together as one establish communion and dispose themselves to listen properly to God’s word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily.” (GIRM #46)

### **Liturgy of the Word**

Although the liturgy is principally the worship of the divine majesty it likewise contains much instruction for the faithful. For in the liturgy God speaks to his people, and Christ is still proclaiming his Gospel. And the people reply to God both by song and prayer. (SC, #33)

The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in a way that fosters meditation; clearly, any sort of haste that hinders recollection must be avoided. The dialogue between God and his people taking place through the Holy Spirit demands short intervals of silence, suited to the assembly, as an opportunity to take the word of God to heart and to prepare a response to it in prayer. (*Lectionary for Mass: Introduction* – 1998 – #28)

“The two parts which in a sense go to make up the Mass, viz. the liturgy of the word and the Eucharistic liturgy, are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship. (SC #56)

#### *Parts of the Liturgy of the Word*

- a) Readings (3 on Sunday, 2 on weekdays – in either case, there is always a reading from the Gospels)
- b) Chants (e.g., responsorial psalm, Gospel acclamation)
- c) Homily
- d) Profession of Faith (on Sundays and solemnities)
- e) Prayer of the Faithful

*The Relationship of the Liturgies of the Word and the Eucharist*

The Church is nourished spiritually at the twofold table of God's word and of the Eucharist: from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed. On the one hand the history of salvation is brought to mind by means of human sounds; on the other it is made manifest in the sacramental signs of the Liturgy.

It can never be forgotten, therefore, that the divine word read and proclaimed by the Church in the Liturgy has as its one purpose the sacrifice of the New Covenant and the banquet of grace, that is, the Eucharist. The celebration of Mass in which the word is heard and the Eucharist is offered and received forms but one single act of divine worship. That act offers the sacrifice of praise to God and makes available to God's creatures the fullness of redemption. (*LMI* #10)

**Liturgy of the Eucharist** (see *GIRM*, #72)

1. At the *preparation of the gifts*, the bread and the wine with water are brought to the altar, the same elements that Christ took into his hands.
  - a) Preparation of the Altar
  - b) Presentation of gifts
  - c) Benediction / incensation (optional)
  - d) Washing of hands
  - e) Invitation to prayer / People's response / Prayer over the gifts
  
2. In the *Eucharistic Prayer* thanks is given to God for the whole work of salvation, and the offerings become the Body and Blood of Christ.

Now the center and high point of the entire celebration begins, namely, the Eucharistic Prayer itself, that is, the prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification. The Priest calls upon the people to lift up their hearts towards the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving; he associates the people with himself in the Prayer that he addresses in the name of the entire community to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the meaning of this Prayer is that the whole congregation of the faithful joins itself with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice. The Eucharistic Prayer requires that everyone listens to it with reverence and in silence. (*GIRM*, #78)

3. Through the fraction and through *Communion*, the faithful, though they are many, receive from the one bread the Lord's Body and from the one chalice the Lord's Blood in the same way the Apostles received them from Christ's own hands.
- a) Lord's Prayer
  - b) Rite of Peace
  - c) Breaking of the bread (fraction rite)
  - d) Communion
  - e) Post-communion prayer

### **Concluding Rite**

- a) *Announcements*
- b) *Greeting*
- c) *Blessing*
- d) *Dismissal*
- e) *Recessional*

### **Biblical Eucharistic Texts** (From *The New American Bible*)

#### Matthew 26:26-28

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, **“Take and eat; this is my body.”** Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, **“Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.”**

#### Mark 14:22-24

While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, **“Take it; this is my body.”** Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, **“This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many.”**

Luke 22:19-20

Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying: **“This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.”** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, **“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.”**

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

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.

*Compare with the formula in the Eucharistic Prayers:*

At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion, he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

**“TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,  
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,  
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.”**

In a similar way, when supper was ended, he took the chalice and, once more giving thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying,

**“TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT:  
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,  
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,  
WHICH WILL BE Poured OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY  
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.  
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.”**

## **Additional Biblical Texts Pertaining to Eucharist**

### *John 6:51-56*

“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.”

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Jesus said to them,

“Amen, amen, I say to you,  
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man  
and drink his blood,  
you do not have life within you.  
Whoever eats my flesh  
and drinks my blood has eternal life,  
and I will raise him on the last day.  
For my flesh is true food  
and my blood is true drink.  
Whoever eats my flesh  
and drinks my blood  
remains in me and I in him.”

### *Luke 24:30-31.35 (Emmaus)*

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.... Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

### *1 Corinthians 10:16-17*

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.