

An Introduction to the Theology of the Eucharist



St. Laurence Catholic Church - February 9, 2019

The Road to Emmaus

- Luke 24:
- 30 - And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.
- 31 - With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.
- The Supper at Emmaus by Caravaggio, 1601



The Eucharist

- Eukharistia: Greek for thanksgiving, gratitude
- Eukharisteo: verb form “to thank, to be thankful” found in Greek New Testament
- Kharis: root meaning “favor, grace” – as in charism, a gift of the Holy Spirit



The Eucharist

- A Meal
- A Memorial
- A Sacrifice
- A Presence
- A Covenant



The Eucharist – A Meal

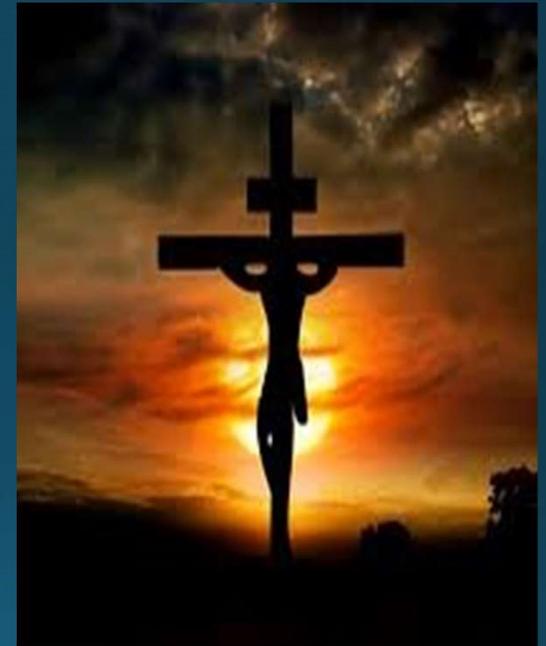
- Jesus gave us this sacrament at the Last Supper, a celebration of the Pasch or Passover meal
- Passover was when God's chosen people, the Israelites, ate the Paschal Lamb before their exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land
- This sacrificial meal strengthened their covenant with God and their identity as God's people
- Jesus established a new covenant, a new relationship, by offering Himself, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world

The Eucharist – A Meal

- We commemorate His Life, Death and Resurrection, the Paschal Mystery, at the Eucharistic meal when we eat His Body and drink His Blood
- In Jesus' time, a ritual of washing feet was done for all guests before a festive meal
- Jesus prepared His disciples to receive the Eucharist by washing their feet and telling them they must do the same for each other
- Washing was symbolic for service and had a significant meaning as Jesus told Peter, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." - John 13:8

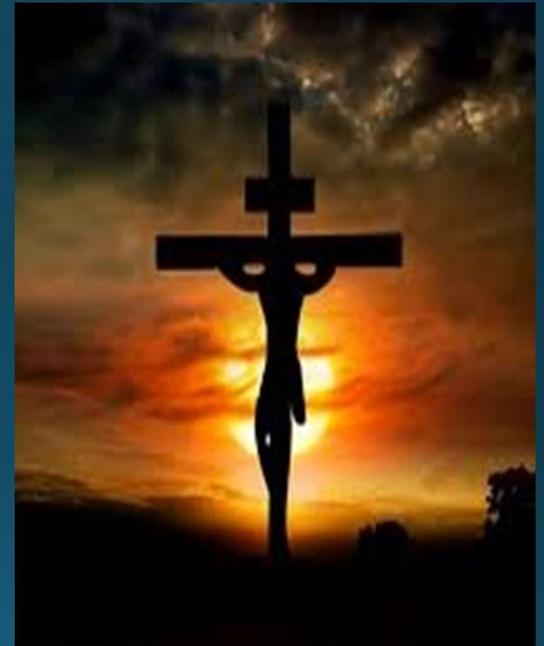
The Eucharist – A Sacrifice

- In our lives, we often must repeat sacrifices we offer for one another
- Jesus offered Himself on the Cross ONCE and FOR ALL
- The Eucharistic sacrifice repeated each time Mass is celebrated is not a new sacrifice but a participation in the one sacrifice of Jesus - through the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist transcends time



The Eucharist – A Sacrifice

- The priest is also the victim; the one offering the sacrifice is the one being sacrificed; the Good Shepherd is also the sacrificial Lamb
- The greatest sacrifice of all is to “lay down one’s life for one’s friends” - John 15:13



The Eucharist – A Memorial



- “Do this in memory of me.” - Luke 22:19
- We use our memories to know people who have died as they once were

The Eucharist – A Memorial



- “Anamnesis” Greek for remembering has a greater meaning of actually being with the remembered (eg - thief on the cross)
- Jesus is telling us that through the act of remembering Him in the Eucharist, He will be with us

The Eucharist – A Presence

- Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist in a substantial way
- Substance is the very being or essence of someone or something
- The reality of Jesus - Body, Blood, soul and divinity - is present in the Eucharist

The Eucharist – A Presence

- Substance of bread and wine is changed to the Body and Blood of Jesus - transubstantiation - appearances remain
- The Risen Jesus is truly with us in the sacrament of the Eucharist - not a sign, symbol or metaphor (see Jn 6:51)

The Eucharist – A Covenant

- “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.”
Lk 22:19
- Sacraments are encounters with Jesus that involve an exchange of persons – like marriage
- Jesus pours out Himself for us and asks that we do the same for Him and for each other
- God entered into several covenants in Old Testament (Noah, Abraham, Moses and David); Jesus is the fulfillment of these covenants, “the new and everlasting covenant”

In Summary

- We encounter Jesus in a very personal way in the Eucharist
- We are united to Him by His Body and Blood and to each other as the members of His Body, the Church - "We are the Body of Christ."
- At Mass, Jesus is present in 4 ways:
 - Sacrament, Word, Presider and Congregation
(altar, ambo, chair and pews)

In Summary

- We offer ourselves in communal, covenantal sacrifice to the One who gave the ultimate sacrifice
- We receive communion to be in communion with Jesus and His Body
- We should reverently and humbly receive Him “under our roof” and contemplate the mystery of the gift of this sacrament of Jesus abiding in us

In Summary

- “The Eucharist is the heart and summit of the life of every Christian and of the whole People of God.” - Lumen Gentium
- “You reply ‘Amen’ to that which you are and by replying, you consent. For you hear ‘The Body of Christ’ and you reply ‘Amen’. Be a member of the Body of Christ so that your ‘Amen’ may be true.” - St. Augustine, Sermon 272

