

Stephen Covey's
The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People
From a Catholic Foundational Perspective

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The Apostles Creed

The *Apostles' Creed* is so called because it is rightly considered to be a faithful summary of the apostles' faith. It is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome. Its great authority arises from this fact: It is "the Creed of the Roman Church, the See of Peter, the first of the apostles, to which he brought the common faith."

- St. Ambrose

Our Profession of Faith Twelve Articles of the Apostles Creed

1. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
2. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord.
3. Who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
4. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
5. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.
6. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
7. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit.
9. The holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
10. The forgiveness of sins,
11. The resurrection of the body,
12. And life everlasting.

7 Habits of Highly Effective People From a Catholic Foundational Perspective

1. Be Proactive

Stop, think, and make good choices. Take responsibility for your actions.

The Catholic Response: Observe carefully, the Commandments, for thus will you give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence. Deuteronomy 4:6

From the Book of Deuteronomy we read, “Observe carefully, the Commandments, for thus will you give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations, who will hear of all these statutes and say, ‘This great nation is truly a wise and intelligent people... Dt. 4:6

Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest. Bind them at your wrist as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates. Dt. 6:6-9

The Commandments of God

1. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.
2. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep Holy the Sabbath Day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 17-19

2. Begin with the End in Mind

*Set a **goal** and make a **plan** on how you're going to meet that goal.*

The Catholic Response: Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5

The Christian Goal: A sanctified, that is, a holy life. In a word, The Beatitudes.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying:

1. *Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
2. *Blessed are they who **mourn**, for they will be comforted.*
3. *Blessed are the **meek**, for they will inherit the land.*
4. *Blessed are they who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they will be satisfied.*
5. *Blessed are the **merciful**, for they will be shown mercy.*
6. *Blessed are the **pure of heart**, for they will see God.*
7. *Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called children of God.*
8. *Blessed are they who are **persecuted for the sake of righteousness**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*You are the **salt of the earth**. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the **light of the world**. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.*

Matthew 5:1-16

The Christian Plan: To abide in Jesus – to remain in Jesus.

Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:4-5 **(How does the Christian abide in Jesus? Principally through the Sacraments.)**

The Seven Sacraments

The Sacraments effect grace, enabling a Christian to achieve the goal of a sanctified life and to live in generous service rendered to others in and through Christ Jesus.

1. **Baptism**– Confers sanctifying grace, cleanses the soul from original sin, and is the sacrament that brings a person into the *Mystical Body of Christ, that is, the Church*.
2. **Confirmation** – The sacrament that completes the grace of baptism by a special outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which seal or confirm the baptized in union with Christ and equip them for active participation in the worship and apostolic life of the Church.
3. **Holy Eucharist** – The sacrament established by Jesus at the Last Supper, in which the mystery of our salvation through participation in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ is renewed and accomplished.
4. **Penance and Reconciliation**–The sacrament by which sins committed after baptism are forgiven through absolution by a priest and the person is reconciled with God and the Church.
5. **Holy Matrimony** – The sacrament by which a man and woman bind themselves to each other in Christ for a lifetime lawful union which is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children.
6. **Holy Orders** – The sacrament of Apostolic Ministry – deacons, priests, bishops - by which the mission entrusted by Christ to the Apostles continues to be exercised in the Church through the laying on of hands.
7. **Anointing of the Sick**– The sacrament by which the grace of healing and comfort, health and strength are given to the Christian suffering the infirmities of serious illness or old age.

3. Put First Things First

Prioritize, and do the most important thing first.

The Catholic Response: Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Matthew 6:33

Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 6:19-34:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. **But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.**

The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness. And if the light in you is darkness, how great will the darkness be.

No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will drink, or about your body, what will you wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into the barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, oh you of little faith? So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow, tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.**

4. Think Win-Win

Have an “everyone-can-win” attitude.

The Catholic Response: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. John 3:16

The Opening of the Gospel According to St. John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. **He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name.**

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth. John 1:1-14

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

And **this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil.** For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But **whoever lives in truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done by God. John 3:16-21**

Everyone can win if we heed the words of Jesus:

Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been solidly set on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell,

the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined.

When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Matthew 7:24-29

5. Seek First to Understand, then to be Understood

Listen with your eyes and heart not just your ears. Listen to the other person's point of view before sharing your own.

The Catholic Response: Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets. Matthew 7:12

First Letter of Peter

All of you be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble. Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing. For whoever would love life and see good days must keep the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking deceit, must turn from evil and do good, seek peace and follow after it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears turned to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against the evildoer. 1 Peter 8-12

Peace Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

6. Synergize

Work together to achieve more.

The Catholic Response: As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. 1 Peter 4:9

We emulate Jesus who works with us:

Come to me, **all you who labor** and are burdened, and I will give your rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light. Matthew 11:28ff

The First Letter of Peter

Be serious and sober for prayers. Let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. **As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.** Whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever. 1 Peter 4:7-11

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

We ask you to respect those who are **laboring** among you and who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you, and to show esteem for them with special love on account of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

We urge you, admonish the idle, cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, and be patient with all. See that no one returns evil for evil; rather, **always seek what is good both for each other and for all.** Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Thessalonians 5:12-18

Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians

We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food. Do not be remiss in doing good. 2 Thessalonians 3:11

The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy

Works of the Church that render proper service to others in Christ Jesus

Corporal Works of Mercy

1. To feed the hungry;
2. To give drink to the thirsty;
3. To clothe the naked;
4. To visit the imprisoned;
5. To shelter the homeless;
6. To visit the sick;
7. To bury the dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. To admonish the sinner;
2. To instruct the ignorant;
3. To counsel the doubtful;
4. To comfort the sorrowful;
5. To bear wrongs patiently;
6. To forgive all injuries;
7. To pray for living and dead.

7. Sharpen the Saw

Take care of yourself. Make it a priority to renew and strengthen your mind, body, heart, and soul on a regular basis.

The Catholic Response: May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely; spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23

First Letter of Peter

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your worries upon him because he cares for you. Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow believers throughout the world undergo the same sufferings. The God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory through Christ Jesus will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little. To him be dominion forever. Amen. 1 Peter 6-11

Second Letter of Peter

Beloved, be on your guard not to be led into the error of the unprincipled and to fall from your own stability. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and to the day of eternity. Amen.
2 Peter 3:17-8

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

Brothers and sisters, you are children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober... Let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet that is hope for salvation. For God did not destine us for wrath, but to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, as indeed you do. 1 Thessalonians 5:5-11

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

Luke 11:1

What is prayer? St. Therese of Lisieux says: “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.”

In response to his disciples’ request “Lord, teach us to pray,” Jesus entrusts them with the fundamental Christian prayer, the Our Father.

“The Lord’s Prayer is truly the summary of the whole gospel,” the “most perfect of prayers.” It is at the center of Scripture.

It is called “the Lord’s Prayer” because it comes to us from the Lord Jesus, the master and model of our prayer.

The Lord’s Prayer is the purest and most perfect prayer of the Church. It is an integral part of the major hours of the Divine Office and the sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Integrated into the Eucharist it reveals the eschatological character of petitions, hoping for the Lord, “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26).

The Seven Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,

- 1. Hallowed be thy name.**
- 2. Thy kingdom come.**
- 3. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**
- 4. Give us this day our daily bread.**
- 5. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.**
- 6. Lead us not into temptation.**
- 7. Deliver us from evil.**

The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist

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. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father." Matthew 26:26-29

At the Last Supper, on the night when he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the centuries 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 eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.

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; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all. Sacred Liturgy – Vat. II

We call this food Eucharist; and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration (Baptism), and is thereby living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, is both the Flesh and Blood of that Incarnated Jesus.

St. Justin the Martyr (100-165 A.D.)

The Eucharist

Source and Summit of Christian Spirituality

By Mark Brumley

The Holy Eucharist, Vatican II tells us, is "the source and summit of the Christian life" (*Lumen gentium*, no. 11; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1324). Since the Christian life is essentially a spiritual life, we might say as well that the Eucharist is the "source and summit of Christian spirituality" too.

To the pious Catholic, that proposition may seem obvious enough, even if he does not quite understand why. Intuitively, he knows that the spiritual life means using every means available to grow closer to Christ. And he knows that Christ Himself is present in the Eucharist in the most sublime manner. It makes sense, then, that the Eucharist should be central to the spiritual life of a Catholic.

But what the devout soul knows about the Eucharist intuitively should, where possible, become better known and more deeply experienced through systematic reflection on the Church's Eucharistic doctrine. The better we understand the Eucharist's role in Christian spirituality, the better we will be able to love Christ present in the Eucharist.

What follows is a summary of Catholic teaching on the Eucharist as both the "source" and the "summit" of Christian spirituality. We will consider each of these ideas in turn.

What Do We Mean By "Source and Summit"?

To say the Eucharist is the "source and summit of Christian spirituality" means at least two things. First, that Christian spirituality flows from the Eucharist as its source, the way light streams forth from the sun. And second, that Christian spirituality is supremely realized in and ordered to the Eucharist as its summit or highpoint – that to which all of our actions should ultimately be directed.

Christian spirituality, then, is a two-way street. It leads us from the Eucharist as our starting point out into the world of daily life and it takes us back home to the Eucharist after our sojourn in the world.

These two dimensions of the Eucharist – it's being both the "source" and "summit" of Christian spirituality – reveal how the Eucharist, being Christ Himself, brings God and man together in a saving dialogue, a mutually giving and receiving relationship. In short, in a covenant of love. The Eucharist is at once the Father's gift of Himself in Christ to us and, through Christ, our offering of Christ and, with Him, of ourselves – our minds and hearts, our daily lives – to the Father. As

the source of Christian spirituality, the Eucharist revealed that our salvation begins with God, not ourselves. God offers Himself to man in Christ first. At the same time, as the summit of Christian spirituality, the Eucharist is man's supreme, grace-enabled, freely given offering of himself back to God through Jesus Christ, our high priest, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The union or intimate, personal fellowship between God and man realized through God's gift of Himself to man and man's faithful response, we call communion.

Put in the traditional language of the Christian spirituality, we say that this communion with God is brought about by grace and lived out in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Because the sacraments are instruments of grace and means of growth in the theological virtues, we can say that Christian spirituality entails what Pope John Paul II called a "sacramental style of life."^[1] It involves using the sacraments to grow in the spiritual life. And because the greatest of sacraments is the Eucharist, Christian spirituality is above all Eucharistic: coming from the Eucharist as its source and directed to it as its summit or zenith.

But precisely how is the Eucharist the source of Christian spirituality? In other words, how precisely is the Eucharist the source of grace and the way we grow in faith, hope and charity? A closer look at the Church's teaching about the Eucharist provides an answer to this question.

The Eucharist as the "Source" of Grace

The Eucharist is the source of grace in a number of ways. First, the Eucharist is Christ Himself, the Author of grace. Other sacraments are actions of Christ, to be sure, but only the Eucharist is Christ Himself, under the "appearances" of bread and wine (CCC, nos. 1324, 1373-1381).

A second way the Eucharist is the source of grace is as the sacramental re-presentation of Christ's saving Sacrifice on the cross. Note it is the sacramental re-presentation of Christ's once for all sacrifice on the cross, not merely a representation or a ritual re-enactment of it (CCC, nos. 1362-1367).

On Calvary, Christ offered Himself to the Father in the Spirit for our salvation. This happened once for all historically -Christ does not die again at Mass. In the Eucharist, however, this same Sacrifice of Christ, made once for all historically, is present here and now sacramentally, and celebrated on the altar. Why can we say that? Because the same Christ who was both priest who offered and victim who was offered is present here and now. Christ is present in heaven as our high priest and our offering for sin (Heb. 8:1-3; 9:24; 1 John 2:1-2), but He is also on our earthly altars as the Eucharist. In this way, the "work of our redemption is accomplished" through His Eucharistic offering (Lumen Gentium, no. 3), and fruits of Christ's unique Sacrifice are applied to us here and now (CCC, no, 1366).

A third way the Eucharist is the source of grace is as the Church's sacrifice. The Eucharist is the Church's sacrifice because it is foremost the Sacrifice of Christ, Bridegroom of the Church, who

is "one-flesh" with the Church (Ephesians 5:21-32). [2] In other words, the Eucharist is the Church's offering by virtue of her "spousal" union with Christ.

This sacrifice of the Church is twofold (CCC, no. 1368). First, the Church offers Christ, the spotless victim, to the Father. And second, the Church, in union with Christ, offers herself to God in the Spirit. To the extent individual members of the Church unite themselves with this offering, they receive the fruits of Christ's Sacrifice and dispose themselves to receive further graces. In this way, the Church is built up in her members as the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Expressed differently, we can say that because the Eucharist is, through Christ, the sacrifice of the Church, in a certain sense, the Church, by the promise of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, "makes" the Eucharist, although it always remains foremost the work of God. But the Eucharist also "makes" the Church (CCC, no. 1396), continually renewing her communion with God through Christ's Sacrifice in the Spirit and bestowing graces upon her. [3] Thus, the Eucharist can be said to be the source of grace and therefore of Christian spirituality, which is the life of grace, because the Church lives and grows in grace through its celebration of the Eucharist.

A fourth way the Eucharist is the source of grace is as a source of repentance. It is this in at least two ways. First, insofar as the fruitful and reverent reception of the Holy Eucharist requires one to examine himself spiritually before coming to the Eucharistic banquet and, if conscious of grave sin, to receive the sacrament of reconciliation before receiving Holy Communion (CCC, no. 1415). And second, in that meditation upon the Sacrifice of Christ made present in the Eucharist – the supreme Sacrifice of Christ offered to atone for our sins – ought to stir us to greater repentance for sin.

The last point is especially important with respect to the spiritual life. Christian spirituality consists of two aspects, a negative one – repentance from sin and purgation of the attachment to sin – and a positive one – growth in the Christian life of faith, hope and charity. The Eucharist prepares us for the positive dimension of Christian living by helping us undertake the negative aspect – rooting out sin from our lives through repentance and purgation.

The Eucharist as the Source of Growth in Faith, Hope and Charity

In addition to being the "source" of Christian spirituality because it is a "source" of grace, the Eucharist also helps us grow in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. These virtues are essential to the spiritual life because they "dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity" (CCC, no. 1812). They are called theological because they direct us to God. We might say that they are the three dimensions – the height, width and depth – in which the Christian life is lived.

The Source of Faith

Faith is the virtue by which we entrust ourselves-mind and will-to God, believing what He has revealed because of who He is (CCC, nos. 143, 1814). How is the Eucharist the source of faith? Like all the sacraments (CCC, no. 1123), the Eucharist is a sign which instructs us. It nourishes and strengthens our faith by what it signifies: the wisdom, love and power of God manifested to us by Christ in His Real Presence and in His Sacrifice. In this respect, the Eucharist is the sacramental "sign of the covenant" par excellence, beckoning us to enter into communion with God by accepting in faith God's saving deeds on our behalf – supremely, the death and resurrection of His Son. The Eucharist should move us to deeper faith by reminding us what God has in fact done for us: manifesting His trustworthiness.

But the Eucharist also fosters the virtue of faith insofar as it signifies the one faith of the Catholic Church. This faith is objectively grounded in the official proclamation of the Word of God in the Eucharistic liturgy, and celebrated in the Eucharistic Sacrifice offered by those in Holy Orders who, possessing apostolic succession, in communion with their bishop and the successor of Peter, legitimately exercise apostolic authority.

The Source of Hope

The Eucharist is also the source of hope. "Hope," the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, "is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit" (no. 1817). The basis of this hope is the salvation won by the death and resurrection of Christ and the gift of His Holy Spirit poured out in our hearts (cf. Romans 5:5-11; 8:23-25; Titus 3:6-7), which is sacramentally present in the Eucharist.

As an efficacious sign of Christ's salvation, the Eucharist gives us hope in God for the grace to live in His friendship in this life and to inherit eternal life in heaven. The Eucharist nourishes our hope, at once pointing back to God's salvific deeds, especially Jesus' death and resurrection, which provides the firm ground for our hope; and forward to what we hope for, the coming of the kingdom and eternal life of communion with the Triune God.

The Source of Charity

Finally, the Eucharist is the source of charity. As Pope John Paul II wrote: "Christian life is expressed in the fulfilling of the greatest commandment, that is to say, in the love of God and neighbor, and this love finds its source in the Blessed Sacrament, which is commonly called the sacrament of love. The Eucharist signifies this charity, and therefore recalls it, makes it present and at the same time brings it about" (DominicaeCenae, no. 5).

We have already considered how the Eucharist sacramentally signifies and makes present the love of God manifested in Christ and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and how the Eucharist is Christ Himself, love incarnate. But the Eucharist is also the source of charity in that it may lead us to love God and His Son Jesus in the Spirit. Seeing what God has done for us in Christ, who is present with us in the Eucharist, we should love God in return, and in the Spirit pour out our hearts to Him through the Eucharistic Christ.

Through the Eucharist, then, we enter into a deeper participation in the life of the Triune God, who is charity itself (1 John 4:16). In turn, this deepened love for God leads to a greater love of neighbor for the sake of the love of God, because "whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:21). We love others because Christ first loved us.

Furthermore, Christ's Eucharistic offering of Himself "becomes of itself the school of active love for neighbor," as Pope John II has written, [4] by revealing to us "what value each person, our brother or sister, has in God's eyes, if Christ offers Himself equally to each one, under the species of bread and wine."

Finally, as the source of grace, the Eucharist is the "source" of charity insofar as grace is necessary for genuine obedience to God's commandments, without which we cannot truly love God (cf. 1 John 5:3).

The Eucharist as the Summit of Christian Spirituality

We have seen how the Eucharist is the source of Christian spirituality – how the Eucharist brings about the Christian way of life in us. We consider now how the Eucharist is the summit or highpoint of Christian spirituality or, as St Thomas Aquinas put it, "the consummation of the whole spiritual life." [5] In other words, how Christian living leads up to and culminates in our participation in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is the summit of the spiritual life in the sense that other aspects of Christian living, including the other sacraments (CCC, no. 1324), [6] are ordered to the Eucharist – to Christ's offering of Himself to the Father in the Spirit for us and to our participation in Christ's offering. In other words, the same profound sacramental link between the Sacrifice of the cross and the Eucharist that makes the Eucharist the source of Christian spirituality also makes it the summit or high point of Christian spirituality.

Christ's Sacrifice, Our Sacrifice

As we have already seen, the Eucharistic Christ not only gives Himself to the Father for us, He is offered to the Father by us in the Spirit, through the indispensable ministry of the sacrificing priest acting in persona Christi – in the person of Christ our high priest Himself and through our union with Christ as members of His Church. [7] But, as also mentioned above, it is not only

Christ who is offered to the Father in the Eucharist; the Church also offers herself in and through her union with Christ in the Spirit:

In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value (CCC, no. 1368).

The self-offering of the Church in the Eucharist is central to the Church's identity as a priestly people. This is, in fact, an important way in which the faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood, offering the sacrifice of themselves in Christ. [8]

Moreover, the Eucharistic offering of the Church is both corporate and objective, and individual and subjective. Corporately and objectively, the Church's offering of herself is constituted by the action of the ministerial priest who, precisely because he acts in persona Christi capitis (in the person of Christ the Head of the Church), also acts in persona Ecclesiae (in the person of the Church) and in the name of the Church (CCC, nos. 1552-1553). [9] The priest represents the Church before God because he represents Christ who is head and bridegroom of the Church.

At the same time, members of the Church offer themselves individually and subjectively in the Eucharistic liturgy, insofar as they unite themselves by intention and action, with the Eucharistic offering of Christ's Sacrifice. In other words, they make Christ's offering for them as individuals their own offering of themselves through Christ. They surrender their minds and hearts, their very lives, to God through Christ's act of self-surrender made present on the altar.

We have already considered the Eucharist as the source of the spiritual life, which we noted is a life of grace lived through the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Since the Eucharist is also the summit of Christian spirituality, the individual and subjective offering of ourselves in the Eucharist also necessarily entails the basics of Christian spirituality – repentance from sin and death to self, as well as a positive growth in the life of grace and the theological virtues. We look now at these things from the vantage point of the Eucharist as their summit or highpoint, rather than their source.

The Need for Repentance

Since all the various ways we give ourselves to God are directed to the Eucharist, this includes repentance from sin. Consequently, if we would offer ourselves to God through the Eucharist and receive from Him the Bread of Life, we must pass through the door of penance. To enter into communion with the all-holy God through the Eucharist, we must, following the general pattern of the spiritual life, undergo purgation. As Pope Pius XII wrote:

"While we stand before the altar ... it is our duty so to transform our hearts that every trace of sin may be completely blotted out, while whatever promotes supernatural life through Christ, may be zealously fostered and strengthened even to the extent that, in union with the

Immaculate Victim, we become a victim acceptable to the Eternal Father" (Mediator dei, no. 100).

When Christ came proclaiming the kingdom of God, He preached conversion and faith. "Repent," He said, "and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Not surprisingly, then, there exists a special link between the Sacrament of Penance and the Eucharist. Pope John Paul II has written of this:

The Eucharist and Penance thus become in a sense two closely connected dimensions of authentic life in accordance with the spirit of the gospel, of truly Christian life. The Christ who calls to the Eucharistic banquet is always the same Christ who exhorts us to penance and repeats his "Repent." Without this constant ever renewed endeavor for conversion, partaking of the Eucharist would lack its full redeeming effectiveness and there would be a loss or at least a weakening of the special readiness to offer God the spiritual sacrifice in which our sharing in the priesthood of Christ is expressed in an essential and universal manner (Redemptorishominis, no. 20).

The Eucharist, then, is the high point of repentance because it is the supreme sacrament of Calvary. All other acts of penance prepare for our participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, our supreme rejection of sin and turning toward Christ and communion with Him.

Offering Ourselves in Faith, Hope and Charity

But Christian spirituality is not simply a life of repentance and purgation; as we have seen, it also includes growth in faith, hope and charity. So, too, our Eucharistic offering, as the summit or highpoint of Christian spirituality, involves the theological virtues. Indeed, acts of faith, hope and charity are specific ways in which we offer ourselves to God in the Eucharist, thereby entering into communion with Him through the highest act of sacrifice possible.

Faith, as we have seen, is an offering of oneself – the response of man to God's gracious initiative in Christ – in which one freely submits intellect and will to God and His Word (CCC, nos. 143, 1814). In the Eucharist, man submits by faith to the Divine Word by which bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, and indeed to the whole Catholic Faith of which the Eucharist is the greatest sacramental sign because it is Christ Himself. This is at least one of the ways in which we can speak of the Eucharist as the "Mystery of Faith."

Furthermore, in receiving Holy Communion in faith one bows before this mystery which only the person of faith perceives: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life within you ... For my flesh is true food and my blood true drink" (John 6:53, 55). In this way, a person offers himself to Christ in faith, saying, "Yes, Lord. I believe what you said."

Most importantly, man's act of faith is supremely realized in believing and receiving what God has done for him in Christ on Calvary. And God's saving act in Christ is supremely realized in the Eucharist, which makes Calvary present.

But the faithful's Eucharistic self-offering is also an offering of hope. Again we note that, by the virtue of hope, a believer trusts in God's promised grace in the Eucharist and that "he who has begun a good work ... will bring it to completion."

In hope, the believer acknowledges God's sufficiency and his own insufficiency. Offering oneself to God in the Eucharist is a profound act of hope in that the Eucharist, as Christ Himself, is God's more-than-sufficient provision for our sins. Indeed, it is only because of Christ, who as priest and victim is present in the Eucharist, that we can hope that any offering of ourselves will be acceptable to God. There remains no greater means by which we hope in God than by the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

To unite ourselves to Christ in the Eucharist, then, is to acknowledge our own insufficiency and our reliance on God's goodness to bring us to eternal life with Him. Through the Eucharist, which is "the pledge of future glory" (CCC, nos. 1402-1405, 1419),^[10] we hope in God to provide us with the grace necessary to be faithful here and now, and to attain eternal life with Him in the age to come. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church has it: "There is no surer pledge or clearer sign of this great hope in the new heavens and the new earth 'in which righteousness dwells' than the Eucharist" (no. 1405).

Perhaps most importantly, the Eucharist is the summit of Christian spirituality because it is the "sacrament of love." Primarily, of course, this means it is the sacrament of God's love for us. At the same time, there is a sense in which the Eucharist, by God's gracious work in us, is the sacrament of our love for God and for our neighbor.

Through charity, man embraces God Himself, who is love. By offering himself to God through his union with Him in the Eucharist, man's love for God reaches a climax: he gives himself to God in the only way possible – through the Father's own Son, Jesus. In this way, God's gracious invitation to communion with human beings is answered through communion with the Eucharistic Christ.

"Greater love has no man than this," the Master taught, "than that he lay down his life for his friends." Through the Eucharist, we join ourselves to Christ and "lay down" our lives in loving union with Jesus' supreme act of obedience to the Father's will. As Christ prayed in Gethsemane that the Father's will be done, so we, in uniting our lives to Christ in the Eucharist, say to the Father, "Thy will be done." As Jesus was obedient "unto death" as an expression of His love for the Father and for us, in the Eucharist we participate in Christ's love of His Father, surrendering ourselves to the Father's will through Jesus, by surrendering our wills "unto death" of ourselves.

But charity is not offered to only God in the Eucharist; love for one another is also expressed and realized therein. Surrendering our wills to God in charity means wanting to please Him – to do what He asks. And what, after the First Great Commandment, does He ask of us? "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Our Eucharistic Sacrifice, then, must include the sacrifice of ourselves in love of, and service to, our neighbor because, as we saw earlier, whoever loves God must also love his neighbor (1 John 4:21).

Love of neighbor means, among other things, that we offer Jesus' great prayer of love to the Father not only for ourselves but for others – for those visibly united with the Church and for others as well, living or dead. The Christian life of intercession for others is supremely expressed and realized in the Eucharist, the greatest prayer that can be offered and the sacramental re-presentation of that Sacrifice by which all other prayer is effectual.

The Eucharist, then, is supremely the sacrament in which we as members of Christ's body are united in faith, hope and charity. We are united by faith, hope and charity with Christ in the Eucharist. And we are united by faith, hope and charity in Christ through the Eucharist, with one another.

In this way, as members of Christ and one another, we become "one body, one spirit in Christ," sharing imperfectly on earth in the heavenly liturgy and in that communion with God which is the goal of the Christian life. Or to put it another way, the Eucharist is the earthly anticipation of the eschatological Wedding Supper of the Lamb, when Christ and His espoused Church fully experience the "one flesh" reality of their spousal and corporeal union.

Conclusion

Let us summarize what we have considered. The Eucharist is both the "source and summit of Christian spirituality." It is the source of Christian spirituality in that, as Christ Himself and as the sacramental re-presentation of Christ's Sacrifice on the cross, the Eucharist is God's gift of Himself in Christ through the Spirit to us. We, as members of Christ's Church, receive this gift by grace and, through grace, grow in communion with God by turning from sin and increasing in faith, hope and charity, to which the Eucharist, as a sacramental sign, gives rise in us.

At the same time, the Eucharist is the summit of Christian spirituality because, as the greatest sacramental sharing in Christ's Sacrifice, it is the greatest gift of ourselves in Christ, corporately and individually, to the Father by the Spirit. As individual members of Christ's body/bride, the Church, our Eucharistic self-donation includes death to ourselves and repentance from sin, and is made complete through our submission to God in faith, hope and charity, by which we are united to Christ's Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Pondering and making our own these great truths about the Eucharist in the Christian life should illuminate our spiritual path and give us more reasons to love the Eucharist, and in this way, help us to grow closer to God and to each other in Christ. Thus will we know evermore

deeply that through the Eucharist we receive from the Father the gift of Himself in His Son and that in the Spirit-inspired, loving response we join ourselves to the Son's gift of Himself back to the Father.

Endnotes:

[1] See *DominicaeCenae*, no. 7.

[2] A succinct statement of Catholic doctrine on this point can be found in the Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery (*EucharisticumMysterium*), #3, c., issued May 25, 1967, by the then Sacred Congregation for Rites.

[3] See *RedemptorisHominis*, no. 5; *DominicaeCenae*, no. 4.

[4] *DominicaeCenae*, no. 6.

[5] *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 73, a. 3

[6] See also *PresbyteriumOrdinis*, no. 5.

[7] See *Mediator Dei*, nos. 80-97, Daughters of St. Paul edition.

[8] Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.

[9] See also *Inter Insigniores*, part 5.

[10] Cf. *SacrosanctumConcilium*, no. 47.

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The Most Blessed Virgin Mary

“Contemplate the face of Christ in union with, and at the school of, his Most Holy Mother.”

To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the “programme” which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, summoning her to put out into the deep on the sea of history with the enthusiasm of the new evangelization. To contemplate Christ involves being able to recognize him wherever he manifests himself, in his many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of his body and blood. The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened. The Eucharist is both a mystery of faith and a “mystery of light.”

John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*

May Mary Most Holy, the Immaculate Virgin, the ark of the new and eternal covenant, accompany us on our way to meet the Lord who comes. In her we find realized most perfectly the essence of the Church. The Church sees in Mary – “Woman of the Eucharist,” as she was called by the Servant of God John Paul II – her finest icon, and she contemplates Mary as a singular model of the Eucharistic life. For this reason, as the priest prepares to receive on the altar the ‘*verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine*,’ (the true body born of the Virgin Mary) speaking on behalf of the liturgical assembly, he says in the words of the canon: “We honour Mary, the ever virgin mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God.” The faithful, for their part, “commend to Mary, Mother of the Church, their lives and the work of their hands. Striving to have the same sentiments as Mary, they help the whole community to become a living offering pleasing to the Father.” She is the “*totapulchar*” (the completely pure), the all beautiful, for in her the radiance of God’s glory shines forth. The beauty of the heavenly liturgy, which must be reflected in our own assemblies, is faithfully mirrored in her. From Mary we must learn to become men and women of the Eucharist and of the Church, and thus to present ourselves, in the words of Saint Paul, “holy and blameless” before the Lord, even as he wished us to be from the beginning.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church – Second Vatican Council

Her privileged office as Mother of God unites the Blessed Virgin with the redeemer Son, and together with her singular graces and gifts unites her also in an intimate way with the Church. The Mother of God is a type of the Church, as Saint Ambrose taught, in the order, that is, of faith, love and perfect union with Christ.

In the mystery of the Church, which is itself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin Mary played a leading role, providing an example as virgin and mother in an eminent and

unique way. In faith and obedience she brought forth on earth the very Son of the Father: she who knew not man was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. As a new Eve she believed, not the serpent of old but the messenger of God, with a faith wholly free from doubt. She gave birth to the Son, appointed by God to be the firstborn among many brothers, that is, among those who believe; with a mother's love she cooperates in their birth and development.

The Church contemplates the depth of her holiness, imitates her charity and in fidelity brings to completion the Father's will; she herself becomes a mother through the word of God received in faith. Through preaching and by baptism she brings forth to new and everlasting life children conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God. She is herself a virgin, preserving with integrity and purity the faith she has reposed in her Spouse. She imitates the mother of her Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit treasures with virginal purity faith in all its fullness, hope in all its certainty, love in all its sincerity.

In the person of the Blessed Virgin the Church already possesses the perfection by which it stands without spot or wrinkle; but the faithful still strive to grow in holiness as they conquer sin. So they lift up their eyes to Mary, shining above the whole community of God's elect as the pattern of virtue. As the Church lovingly reflects on her and contemplates her in the light of the Word made man, it reverently enters more deeply into the surpassing mystery of the incarnation and takes on more and more the likeness of its Spouse.

Mary, because she has entered intimately into the history of salvation, in a certain sense gathers up in her own person the great truths of the faith and awakens their resonance when she is the object of preaching and veneration; she summons the faithful to her Son, to his sacrifice and to the Father's love. In seeking to further the glory of Christ, the Church becomes more and more like Mary, its exalted type, as it continues its progress in faith, hope and charity, seeking and fulfilling the divine will in all things.

So also in its apostolic task the Church rightly looks to the one who bore Christ, Christ who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin in order that he might also be born and grow in the hearts of the faithful. In her whole life this virgin mother showed herself as an example of that motherly love that must animate all who share in the apostolic mission of the Church for the regeneration of mankind.

Marian Prayers

Ave Maria

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Luke 1:28 & Luke 1:42

Salve Regina

Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us O holy mother of God that we made be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petition, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Te Deum

Ancient Easter Vigil Hymn

You are God: we praise you;
You are the Lord: we acclaim you;
You are the eternal Father:
All creation worships you.
To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
Cherubim and Seraphim, sing in endless praise:
Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaim you:
Father, of majesty unbounded, your true and only Son, worthy of all worship, and the Holy Spirit,
advocate and guide.
You, Christ, are the king of glory, the eternal Son of the Father.

When you became man to set us free you did not spurn the Virgin's womb.
You overcame the sting of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
You are seated at God's right hand in glory.
We believe that you will come, and be our judge.
Come then, Lord, and help your people, bought with the price of your own blood, and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.
Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance.
Govern and uphold them now and always.
Day by day we bless you.
We praise your name for ever.
Keep us today, Lord, from all sin.
Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.
Lord, show us your love and mercy:
For we put our trust in you.
In you, Lord, is our hope:
And we shall never hope in vain. Amen.