

Eucharist



The central element of our faith is Sunday Mass and the Sacrament of Eucharist. Sharing a meal with his friends was central to Jesus' life, as it was for any Jew. He and his apostles often broke bread together and shared each other's company. The Passover Meal on the night before he died was the last of many suppers with his friends, although richer in meaning than they could have imagined.

'Then he took some bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it and gave it to them, saying 'This is my body which will be given for you; do this as a memorial of me'. He did the same with the cup after supper, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood which will be poured out for you'. (Luke 22. 19-20)

Jesus himself continues this great gesture today when we gather together for the Eucharist or Sunday Mass. He draws us deep into his sacrifice and gives us his own body and blood, the gift of himself. Through the words of the priest, Jesus speaks the same words today as he did at the Last Supper.

The Eucharist is the heart of the life the community. Everything else flows from it and leads back to it.

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

- How important are the Sacraments in your life as a Catholic?
- How central is the Mass to you? Could you go to Mass more often, perhaps on a weekday occasionally as well as on Sundays?
- Are you a Eucharistic person?



Our celebration of Eucharist is like a shared meal with friends and family. We greet each other, we share stories, we remember why we gather, we share a meal and we go home from the celebration renewed. Eucharist nourishes us.

Think about how you celebrate special meals like Thanksgiving, Christmas or Easter and what specifically happens at that meal.

Think about the typical things that you do before, during, and after the meal...



- How do you greet people when they arrive?
- How do you “catch-up” with each other?
- How do you prepare to eat the actual meal?
- What do you do when the meal is over?

Rituals are important in our lives because they help define who we are. As Catholics, we have lots of rituals that are very similar to the rituals we have at home. Sunday Mass or Eucharist is one of those rituals that really is no different than the special meals that you have been thinking about.

Here are examples of typical things we do at significant meals:

- We greet people when they arrive – get hugs and kisses.
- We tell them that we are happy to see them.
- We invite them in and take their coats, etc.
- We tell stories—to “catch-up” with each other.

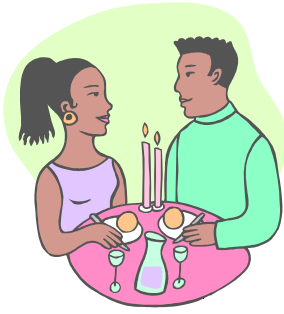
■ Rituals from Sunday Mass...Gathering Rite and Liturgy of the Word

1. **Gathering:**

- The *Opening Hymn*
- The *Sign of the Cross*
- The *Greeting*
- The *Penitential Rite*
- The *Gloria*
- The *Opening Prayer*

2. **Storytelling:**

- The Readings
- the Responsorial Psalm
- The Gospel Acclamation
- the Gospel
- the Homily
- The Profession of Faith
- The Prayers of the Faithful.



The things you do AFTER people arrive and they are greeting and after they share their stories and have gotten caught up.

Here are examples:

- We set the table.
- We gather at the table.
- We say grace or a special prayer before the meal.
- We eat the meal—tell more stories, remember good times, people, etc.
- We say goodbye and hope you will get together again soon.

There are similar rituals during Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Concluding Rite.

3. Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts
- The Eucharistic Prayer
- The Communion Rite

4. The Concluding Rite

The Concluding Rite includes:

- Blessing
- Recessional
- Closing Hymn

Once we have heard God’s Word and eaten the Body of Christ, it is time for us to leave church and put everything we have learned into practice. We go to school to do good works, treat our friends and families with respect and to help one another by becoming Jesus’ hands to the world.

Similarities between a family meal and the Mass.

Family Meal

- 1) We gather.
- 2) We tell our stories.
- 3) We share our meal by
 - a) setting the table
 - b) saying grace
 - c) eating and drinking
- 4) We return home.

Eucharistic Meal

- 1) Gathering
- 2) Storytelling (Liturgy of the Word)
- 3) Meal sharing (Liturgy of Eucharist)
 - a) Preparation of the Table
 - b) Eucharistic Prayer
 - c) Communion Rite
- 4) Sending Forth (Commissioning)

Teachings on Eucharist...

There are a number of great teachings of Eucharist that we as Catholics value and embrace. If we understand a little bit about these themes, then our celebrations of Eucharist will teach us a great deal about God and God's love for the world and help us to be Christ's body on earth.

1. Eucharist is a Memorial of Christ's Death and Resurrection

Think for a minute about how Jesus must have felt on the night of the Last Supper. He was gathering with his friends to celebrate and pray and yet he knew that this was the night before he would be put to death on the cross. These friends whom he loved very much would continue his mission. He knew that they would have hard times and run into opposition. He also knew that they would miss him. How could he give his love to them even after he died? He wanted to give them everything - all of his love and everything they would need to stay faithful to the mission. **On that night, Jesus gave them Eucharist in the sharing of the bread and the wine.**



Catechism Connection #1362 "The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice, in the liturgy of the Church which is his Body. In all the Eucharistic Prayers we find after the words of institution a prayer called the *anamnesis* or memorial."

2. Eucharist is a shared meal which strengthens and nourishes us.

We celebrate many of the most important moments in our lives with a meal. Births, graduations, birthdays, weddings, new friendships and special family occasions are times when we sit at a table and share food with each other. Eucharist is given to us as a community. We remember the story of the last supper and through the Holy Spirit, the story is made real in our midst. We don't just remember that Jesus gave Eucharist to his disciples. **We live the reality that as Jesus' disciples today, we are given Eucharist to nourish us, to guide us, to make us one and to strengthen us for our mission of love to the world.**

Catechism Connection #1394 "As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity *wipes away venial sins*. By giving himself to us Christ revives our love and enables us to break our disordered attachments to creatures and root ourselves in him. "



3. **Eucharist is the real presence of Christ.** In Eucharist we receive the gift of God's love through the real presence of Christ. God's love is given to us in the Eucharist to guide, strengthen and nourish our lives. As Catholics we believe that Jesus is present to us in a real way in the sharing of the bread and wine of Eucharist. This real presence makes a difference. Think for a moment about the people who have loved you and how their real presence makes a difference in your life. God wants to do that for us.

God wants to be really, physically present in our lives. We believe Christ is present at Eucharist in the Word, in the community gathered, in the presider, and in the bread and wine.

Catechism Connection # 1374 "The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "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.*"

4. **Eucharist transforms us as community into the Body of Christ.**

When the minister gives us Eucharist, he or she says: Body of Christ. We say: Amen. Our Amen means Yes. Yes, we believe and Yes we will. This has two meanings: we believe that the bread and wine becomes the love of Jesus made real. It is not just bread and wine-it is the body and blood of Christ. We also are saying Yes that we will become the Body of Christ.

Catechism Connection #1396 "*The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church.* Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body - the Church...If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond "Amen" ("yes, it is true!") and by responding to it you assent to it."



5. Eucharist means thanksgiving.



Catechism Connection #1360 "The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption, and sanctification. Eucharist means first of all "thanksgiving.""

Catechism Connection #1328 "The inexhaustible richness of this sacrament is expressed in the different names we give it. Each name evokes certain aspects of it. It is called: Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. The Greek words *eucharistein* and *eulogein* recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim - especially during a meal - God's works: creation, redemption, and sanctification."

6. Eucharist is about the Kingdom of God

When we say amen at Eucharist, we also commit ourselves to the mission of Jesus, the Kingdom of God. In a sense, we put on the eyes of Christ to see the poor, the needy, and the outcast in our communities. We put on the ears of Christ to hear the stories of hurt and to help heal loneliness. We put on the heart of Christ to cry with, laugh with and join our lives to those in need. We put on the hands of Christ to reach out, to give bread, to touch. We put on the feet of Christ to walk with those who have no one.

Catechism Connection #2816 "In the New Testament, the word *basileia* can be translated by "kingship" (abstract noun), "kingdom" (concrete noun) or "reign" (action noun). The Kingdom of God lies ahead of us. It is brought near in the Word incarnate, it is proclaimed throughout the whole Gospel, and it has come in Christ's death and Resurrection. The Kingdom of God has been coming since the Last Supper and, in the Eucharist, it is in our midst..."



7. Eucharist witnesses to the world the hope and joy of God.

When we gather for Eucharist we show our communities the importance of faith and faithfulness. We give witness to the power of God in our lives, and we witness to our need for God.



Catechism Connection #2182 "Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

8. Sunday Eucharist is THE holy day of obligation in the life of the Church.

We go to Sunday worship not because we have to, but because we need to. We need Sunday Eucharist to help us see the presence of God in our every day lives, we need Sunday Eucharist to give us sustenance for the journey, we need the Sunday Eucharistic community to support and challenge us that we might be God's Good News for all.



Catechism Connection #2177 "The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. "Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church." "

9. Eucharist unites us to our brothers and sisters everywhere, including the communion of saints, the

living and the dead! The universal nature of Eucharist connects us as the Body of Christ through time and space—a body not confined by geography or nationality or by life or death.

Catechism Connection #960 "The Church is a "communion of saints": this expression refers first to the "holy things" (*sancta*), above all the Eucharist, by which "the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ, is both represented and brought about" (LG 3)."

