

# THE HOLY EUCHARIST



The Holy Eucharist is the greatest of all the sacraments, since it contains Jesus Himself. For this reason all the other sacraments are oriented to it: Baptism and Confirmation are completed by the Eucharist; Penance prepares us to receive the Eucharist worthily; the Eucharist crowns a couple's wedding vows, as well as the ordination of a man to the diaconate, priesthood, or episcopacy; and finally, when someone is dying and is given the "last rites," the Eucharist is the last Sacrament received, ushering the person into eternal life. The Eucharist is at the heart of liturgy and the Christian life, and it is a foretaste of eternal life.

## *When did Jesus give us the Eucharist?*

On the night before He died, Jesus organized a "Last Supper" with His apostles. It took place in a specially prepared "large upper room" (Mk 14:15) in a house in Jerusalem, and it was in the context of the Passover. The Passover was an annual Jewish feast that celebrated the first Passover, when the Israelites slaughtered and roasted Passover lambs in the evening, sprinkled the blood from the lambs on their doorposts, consumed the lambs, and then departed from Egypt in haste. It was the night of liberation, when the Israelites left the plight of slavery in Egypt and commenced a journey that would lead to the Promised Land, where they could live and worship God in freedom (Ex 11-12).

The Passover was the greatest Jewish Feast, and it began a weeklong feast of Unleavened Bread. At the time of Jesus, the Passover involved lambs first being slaughtered and sacrificed in the Temple on the day of the evening feast. Then, each household would take a lamb to their home and celebrate the Passover meal, which included Scriptural readings, a memorial of the first Passover, various prayers, and the consumption of the lamb, unleavened bread, wine, and herbs. It was led by the head of the household.

Jesus celebrated a meal like this with His disciples on the night before He died. It was at this meal that Jesus washed the feet of His disciples (Jn 13), gave a last discourse to His disciples before His death (Jn 14-17), and gave them the gift of the Eucharist (1 Cor 11:23-26; Mk 14:22-25; Mt 26:26-29; Lk 22:14-23). At the end of this meal, Jesus added a completely new element: He took bread and wine and declared them to be His Body and Blood which would be "given" up

and “poured out” the next day (Lk 22:19-20). He then told His disciples to eat and drink and commanded them to “do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:24).

### ***Where is the Eucharist mentioned or inferred in the Bible?***

In the Old Testament, the Eucharist is prophesied or prefigured in the following passages:

- *The Sacrifice of Melchizedek (Gen 14:17-24)*: Jesus parallels the priest Melchizedek. Melchizedek is both a priest and a king. He is king of “Salem,” which means peace, and which is the future “Jerusalem.” His name means “king of righteousness” in Hebrew. He is greater than Abraham, since he blesses Abraham (Gen 14:19-20; Heb 7:6-10). David is considered a priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110:4). Melchizedek is eternal-like, since he seems to come from nowhere and returns to nowhere (Heb 7:3). His sacrifice, curiously, consists in the offering of bread and wine (Gen 14:18). Jesus, as the New David, is also a priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 7:15-17). Jesus is both priest (Heb 4:14) and king (Jn 18:37). He is also the true King of Righteousness (Rev 19:11) and Prince of Peace (Is 9:6). He is the eternal Son of God (Heb 7:3). For this reason, He is also greater than Abraham (Heb 7:6-10). His sacrifice involves bread and wine changed into His Body and Blood and offered in Jerusalem (Mk 14:12-25).
- *The Passover Lamb (Ex 12-13)*: The Passover Lamb was the sacrifice that commenced the journey to the Promised Land, making it possible for the Israelites to be delivered. The lamb had to be unblemished (Ex 12:5). It was pierced for roasting, and hyssop was used to sprinkle its blood on the doors of the Israelites, marking them as the “firstborn of God” (Ex 12:22; 4:22). Jesus is the New Passover Lamb Whose sacrifice makes our journey to the Promised Land of Heaven possible. He is unblemished in His sinlessness. He is crucified at the same time that the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the Temple (Jn 19:14). Hyssop was used to raise vinegar to the lips of Jesus (Jn 19:29). And we partake of this Passover Lamb in the Eucharist. With the blood of Christ through the Eucharist, we are marked as the “firstborn of God” in His Son, Jesus.
- *The Manna (Ex 16:1-36)*: In a barren and food-deprived desert, God provided a bread-like substance for nourishment for the Israelites as “food for the journey” on their way to the Promised Land. The manna descended from the skies and settled on the ground six days of the week. A little manna was also preserved perpetually in the Ark of the Covenant as a kind of memorial (Ex 16:32-34). At the Last Supper, Jesus gives us the “true bread” (Jn 6:32), His Body and Blood, as a “memorial” of His Passion and as the food for our journey to eternal life.
- *The Bread of the Presence (Ex 25:23-30; Lev 24:5-9)*: The Bread of the Presence (or literally “Bread of the Face”), was kept in the Tabernacle, and a special, continual sacrifice on the Golden Table within it. It seems to be “memorial” of the covenant of Mount Sinai when the elders of Israel “saw the God of Israel”, “beheld God”, and “ate and drank” (Ex 24:9-11). It was both a sacrifice and a meal. There were twelve

loaves, representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Lev 24:5-9). On the three great Jewish feasts, the Bread of the Presence was shown to the people while they were told, “Behold God’s love for you,” to fulfill the requirement for male Jews to see God’s face on these feasts (Ex 34:23; 23:17). The Eucharist is the true “Bread of the Presence” that is given to the twelve apostles at the Last Supper. It is the very Presence of Jesus. It contains the sacrifice of Jesus offered continually to the Father through the Church. In Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, we gaze upon “God’s love for you.”

- *The Universal Sacrifice (Mal 1:11)*: While there were many synagogues in first century Judaism, there was only one Temple. And the Temple was the only place of sacrifice. Yet, Malachi foretold a day in which an acceptable sacrifice would be offered in every place around the world by the Gentiles. This is fulfilled in the Eucharist. Interestingly, this verse was the earliest Old Testament verse quoted as a prefiguration of the Eucharist by the early Church Fathers.
- *The Animal and Grain Sacrifices of the Temple (Lev 1-7; 16)*: As discussed in the section on liturgy, the Eucharist is the sacrifice that fulfills all the sacrifices of old.

In the New Testament, the Eucharist is mentioned or inferred in the following passages:

- *The Last Supper (1 Cor 11:23-26; Mk 14:22-25; Mt 26:26-29; Lk 22:14-23)*: On the night before He dies, Jesus gives us the great gift of His love, His presence, His perfect act of worship in the Eucharist, and spiritual nourishment.
- *The Multiplication of the Loaves (Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-10; Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-15)*: Not only do the miracles of Jesus which involve the multiplication of the loaves resonate with certain Old Testament events, such as the provision of manna in the desert (Ex 16), or when Elisha multiplied barley loaves (2 Kgs 4:1-7; 42-44). They also resemble the Last Supper and the Eucharist in the early Church. In both the multiplication of the loaves and at the Last Supper, the “hour is late” (Mk 6:35), people “recline” (Mk 6:39; 8:6; Lk 22:14), and Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to the apostles. In the Mass, those ordained by the successors to the apostles distribute the Bread of Life, just as the apostles distributed to the crowds the bread and fish Jesus had multiplied (Mk 6:41). The leftovers are all collected and consumed (Mk 6:43), as has always been the practice with the Eucharist in the Church.
- *The Bread of Life Discourse (Jn 6:25-71)*: Following the first multiplication of the loaves (vv.1-15) and in the context of the Passover feast (v.4), certain Jews challenge Jesus, expecting Him to perform something as spectacular as the miracle of the manna in the Old Testament (vv. 30-31). Jesus tells them that He Himself is the “bread of life” (v.35), that “whoever eats this bread will live forever” (v.58), and that He will give His flesh and blood as true food and drink “for the life of the world” (vv.55 & 51), through which believers will “abide” in Jesus and “live forever” (vv.56, 58, 54, 50). Not knowing what this means, many no longer follow Jesus after hearing this discourse (v.66). Jesus then turns to the apostles and asks, “Will you also go away?” On behalf of the other apostles,

Peter responds, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to know and to believe that you are the Holy One of God” (v.68). Although Peter and the other apostles don’t understand what Jesus means either, they trust. At the Last Supper, all is made clear in the gift of the Eucharist. It is also there that Judas will betray Jesus, at the most intimate moment of Jesus with His disciples. The mention of Judas in John 6 is just one of many connections between this chapter and the Last Supper. The greatness of the gift of the Eucharist contrasts with the greatness of the betrayal.

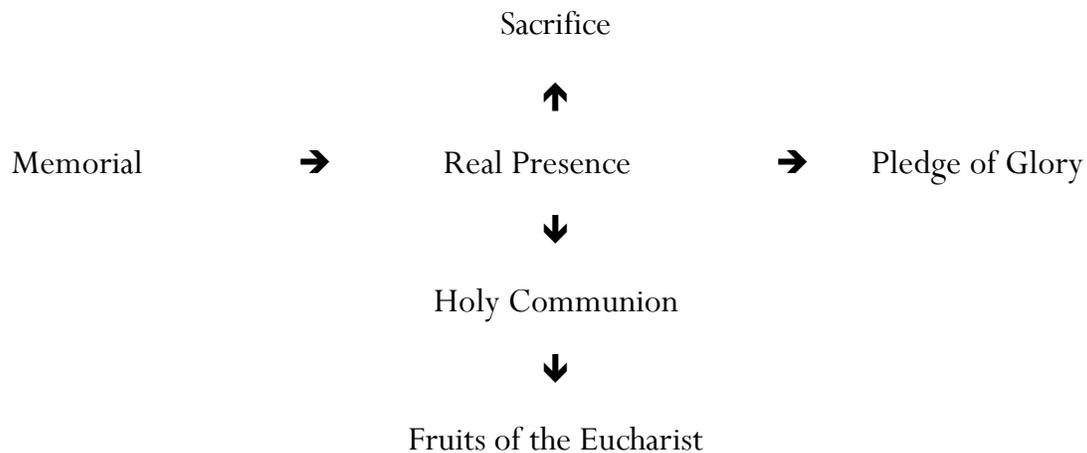
- *The Theme of the Chalice:* Jesus asks James and John if they are able to drink from the chalice that He will drink from and to be baptized in His baptism, which is a reference to Christ’s suffering (Mk 10:38-39). At the Last Supper, the disciples are given a share in the chalice of Christ, which is linked to His Passion. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays that, if it be the Father’s will, the chalice of His sufferings might be removed (Mk 14:36). And finally, on the Cross, Jesus says, “I thirst,” drinks a little vinegar, and declares, “It is finished” (Jn 19:28-30), referring to His sufferings but also, and above all, to the work of redemption. All these references to Christ’s “chalice” are intimately connected to the Eucharistic chalice we drink from.
- *The Road to Emmaus (Lk 24):* The appearance of the risen Jesus to His disciples on the road to Emmaus, and in Emmaus itself, parallels the Mass. Jesus first opens up the Scriptures to them, to show how He is the fulfillment of everything in the law, prophets, and psalms (vv.27 & 44). Reflecting on this, the disciples exclaim, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (v.32). After this exposition of the Scriptures, the disciples beg Jesus to stay with them. So, He does. And “when He was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him” (vv.30-31). The disciples later recount to others “how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread” (v.35). Likewise in the Mass, Jesus first speaks to us in the Scriptures, and then afterwards manifests Himself to us in the “breaking of the bread.” The first part of the Mass we call the *Liturgy of the Word*, the second the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*.
- *In the Acts of the Apostles:* In the road to Emmaus, and in the Acts of the Apostles, the Eucharist is referred to as “the breaking of the bread” (Lk 24:30-35; Acts 2:42-46; 20:7). The disciples remember the specific action when Jesus “broke” the bread at the Last Supper (Lk 22:19), which action is a symbol of how Christ was “broken” for us. This being-broken, however, enables us all to partake of the One Bread, Christ, and thus be unified in Him.
- *Certain passages in St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (5:7-8; 10:14-22; 11:17-34):* In chapter 5, Paul refers to Christ as the Paschal Lamb who has been sacrificed, and which sacrifice we celebrate as a “festival,” and that we are called to celebrate this festival with the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” In chapter 10, Paul refers to the Eucharist as “spiritual food” (like the manna in the desert) and “spiritual drink” which we drink from the Rock that is Christ (10:1-4). Paul also says that we have a real “communion” or “participation” in the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist (v.16). In contrasting the

Eucharist with food which pagans offered to idols, Paul implies that the Eucharist is a sacrifice (vv.18-22). He also connects the Eucharist to the Church, and sees the Eucharist as a sign and source of unity: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (v. 17). In chapter 11, Paul calls the Eucharist the “Lord’s Supper” and gives us the earliest account of the institution of the Eucharist we have (v.20). He speaks of partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ in a worthy manner, lest we be guilty of profaning the Body and Blood of the Lord (v.27). He also emphasizes the social aspects of the Eucharist and our relationships in the Church, which should be marked by unity, humility, and charity, versus pride, selfishness, egoism, and division (vv.17-22).

- *In the Book of Hebrews:* There are many Eucharistic overtones in the Book of Hebrews. At the end of the book, the author speaks of a Christian “altar” from which “those who serve the tent” (the Jews who do not accept Jesus) “have no right to eat” (13:10). In chapter 6, after a reference to Baptism and what we now call Confirmation (“the laying on of hands”), the author mentions that Christians have “tasted the heavenly gift” (6:4). Throughout the book, Jesus is portrayed as a priest, first “according to the order of Melchizedek” (7:1-28), and secondly as a kind of New Aaron offering His Body (10:5, 10), His Blood (9:12-14; 10:19; 12:24), indeed Himself (9:26, 28) in Heaven as a kind of new and fulfilled Day of Atonement (9-10). We will remember that Jesus, like Melchizedek, presents “bread and wine.” In the case of Jesus, bread and wine are changed into Christ’s Body and Blood. Finally, at the end of the book, the author prays that God may equip his hearers with every good thing “by the blood of the eternal covenant” (13:20-21). It should be remembered that Jesus speaks about the “blood” of the “new covenant” at the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:25). In short, the book of Hebrews portrays Jesus as both a priest and victim, elucidates how His passion is a sacrifice, implies that we partake of this sacrifice when we eat from a distinctively Christian altar, and that we are equipped with every good thing through “the blood of the eternal covenant” which Christians receive in the Eucharist.
- *In the Book of Revelation:* In the book of Revelation, we are given a glimpse into the worship that takes place in Heaven. At the center of this worship is the “Lamb standing, though it had been slain” (Rev 5:6). The Lamb, Who is Jesus, is the central character throughout the book. We Catholics see the Mass as an earthly participation in this heavenly worship. As in the heavenly worship, in the Mass there is “silence” (8:1), revelation from a scroll (5:1-9; 6:14; 10:2, 8-10), the faithful united in “worship” (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:1, 16; 14:7; 15:4; 19:4; 22:3, 9), bowing down (3:9; 4:10; 5:8, 14; 19:4), singing (4:8, 10; 14:3; 15:3), incense (5:8; 8:3-4), and we all partake of a great “supper”: “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (19:9). In the book, there is also mention of a “hidden manna” and the “tree of life” which those who conquer in Christ are able to partake of (2:17; 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).

*What does the Church teach about the Eucharist in light of these passages?*

There are many dimensions to the gift of the Eucharist. Two traditional ways of summarizing Eucharistic doctrine are (1) to speak of how the Eucharist connects to the past, present, and future, and (2) to speak of how the Eucharist “ascends” to God in sacrifice and “descends” to us in Holy Communion, from there overflowing into our lives. These two traditional summaries can be conveniently combined in the form of a cross:



Insofar as the Eucharist is connected to the past and makes it present, we call it a “Memorial.” Insofar as Jesus is present to us here and now in the Eucharist, we refer to the “Real Presence.” Insofar as the Eucharist is a foretaste of Heaven and food for the journey, we call it a “Pledge of Glory.” Insofar as the Eucharist ascends to God in worship, we call it a “Sacrifice.” Insofar as it descends to us as a divine Gift that we receive, we call it “Holy Communion.” Finally, the “Fruits of the Eucharist” are a way of talking about the effects in our life that God intends to bring about through the Eucharist. Let us, then, explain each of these dimensions in more detail.

*How is the Eucharist a “Memorial”?*

In the section on the liturgy, we already discussed how the past, namely the Paschal Mystery, is made present in the liturgy and sacraments, above all in the Mass. It is important to realize that we don’t simply remember a past event in the Eucharist, but the past event becomes present to us here and now in a mysterious but real way. In the Mass and in all the sacraments, then, we are mysteriously and truly connected to the Paschal Mystery as it happened and as it in some way endures in the risen humanity of Jesus right now in Heaven.

### *How is Jesus really present in the Eucharist?*

The Bible very clearly teaches that the Eucharist is not just a symbol, but the very Body and Blood of Jesus. The Church Fathers are unambiguous and unanimous on this point as well. Church teaching has affirmed it with the highest authority, and many miracles and saints through the centuries have borne witness to the truth of the *Real Presence*. The following points clarify the Church's belief.

First, the Church teaches that Jesus is really present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist in His full humanity and divinity. The traditional language to express this is “body, blood, soul, and divinity.”

Second, to explain the change, or transition, from bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, the Church uses the term *Transubstantiation*. In short, this term literally means the process whereby one substance is changed into another. Simply, when bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, one thing changes and another doesn't. The Church says that the “substances” of bread and of wine change into the Body and Blood of Christ, but the “accidents” or “properties” or “qualities” or “appearances” (basically everything we can perceive with our senses) don't change. In other words, the underlying reality of bread and wine has changed into the actual Body and Blood of the risen Jesus at the words of Consecration, with the result that there is no longer any underlying reality of bread and wine, but only Jesus. At the same time, the Sacrament still looks like, and tastes like, and smells like bread and wine. There is no perceptible change. The change is on a level we cannot see and have no access to through our senses or even through the observational methods of science. It is only by faith that we know that the Eucharist is the real Body and Blood of Jesus. But this faith is most certain.

Third, although the bread turns into the Body of Christ, and the wine into the Blood of Christ, the whole of Jesus is present under the forms of both bread and wine. This is because all the dimensions of the risen Jesus are united in His Person. So, where His Body is, there also is His Blood, His human soul, and His divine nature. The same is true with His blood. This is what we call *Concomitance*. In short, where one part of Jesus is present, every part of Jesus is present.

Fourth, Jesus is entirely present under each part of the form of bread and wine. In other words, when the “bread is broken,” Jesus is not divided. He remains whole and entirely present under each part, insofar as the form of bread and wine is retained.

Fifth, the Church teaches what we might call the “abiding presence” of Jesus in the Eucharist. That is, Jesus is not only present in the Eucharist at Mass. But once the bread and wine are consecrated, He is present until the Sacrament loses the qualities of bread and wine. This enables us to bring the Real Presence of Jesus to the sick who are unable to attend Mass. It also enables us to reserve some Hosts in the Tabernacle in our churches, and occasionally to expose a Host for the faithful to adore, which practice we call “Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament” or “Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.”

Sixth, one can think about the causes of the Eucharist. God is the main cause that changes bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. That is why we call down the Holy Spirit at Mass in what we call the *Epiclesis* (“calling down” in Greek), to effect this transformation. The priest, who is ordained in the name of Christ, acts *in persona Christi* (“in the person of Christ”) in the Mass, and since, through ordination to the priesthood, he was given the sacred power to consecrate (or “confect”) the Eucharist, the priest is the necessary instrument through which God effects the change of transubstantiation. The bread used for the Eucharist must be made from wheat, and the wine must be produced from grapes. The essential *form* of the Sacrament of the Eucharist is the words of Jesus: “This is my Body. . . This is my blood.” Finally, the priest must have the intention to consecrate this or that bread or wine, without which there is no transformation.

Seventh, the Church teaches that Jesus becomes present in the Eucharist as He presently exists in Heaven. At the same time, the Paschal Mystery, as explained before, is mysteriously and truly made present, so that we can offer ourselves in worship along with Jesus’s perfect act of worship, through the priest celebrating Mass. Jesus is also not present in two different places at the same time, namely in Heaven and in the Eucharist. Rather, He makes His Real Presence in Heaven present to us sacramentally in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, His one real presence in Heaven is made fully present and accessible to us.

### ***How is the Eucharist a “Pledge of Glory”?***

Just as the manna in the Old Testament was “food for the journey,” sustaining the Israelites through the desert until they reached the Promised Land, so the Eucharist is our spiritual food for the journey through this life on our way to the Promised Land of Heaven. Further, just as the manna ceased once the Israelites reached the Promised Land, since they were then able to eat from the land, the Eucharist will cease as a Sacrament when we reach Heaven. This is because, as the Council of Trent in the 1500’s said, in the Eucharist we partake, under veils, of the God whom we will partake of without veils in Heaven. In this way, the Eucharist is a foretaste of Heaven.

### ***What should we know about receiving Jesus in Holy Communion?***

Bishops, priests, and deacons are what we call *Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*. Trained and designated lay people can help to distribute the Eucharist (in the Latin Rite) when there are not enough clergy to distribute the Eucharist. Such lay persons are called *Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*. This is a special ministry, to be an assistant to the clergy in distributing Holy Communion at Mass when there is need, and in bringing Holy Communion to the sick.

One must be baptized before receiving the Holy Eucharist. In addition, under non-emergency circumstances, one must be Catholic to receive Holy Communion. Under certain conditions, the Eastern Orthodox can receive Holy Communion in a Catholic Church. Only in an emergency situation and under certain conditions, Protestants can be admitted to Holy

Communion. The dignity of the Sacrament demands that persons at least need to be in a “state of grace” to receive Holy Communion, meaning that one is in God’s friendship, having turned away from all serious sin, and having confessed all known serious sins in Confession beforehand. For the Latin Church, it is required to abstain from all food and drink (except water) at least one hour before receiving Holy Communion. It is also good to long to receive the Eucharist during the week, to arrive early for Mass to give oneself sufficient time to prepare oneself in prayer to receive the great gift of the Eucharist, and to receive the Eucharist with the greatest faith, love, and reverence.

In the Latin Church, the general custom is to receive Holy Communion on the tongue. However, in certain countries, including the United States, it is permitted to receive Holy Communion in the hand. Those leading RCIA will go over how to properly receive on the tongue or in the hand, and the response (“Amen”) and gestures involved.

Lastly, after receiving the Eucharist, it is fitting to speak to Jesus intimately, since He is inside of you, to give thanks for such a tremendous gift, and to also be aware of your brothers and sisters in Christ also receiving such a great gift. It is a beautiful custom to spend a few minutes after Mass in silent prayer and thanksgiving.

### ***What are the “Fruits of the Eucharist”?***

There are many fruits, or intended effects of the Eucharist in our lives, when we are open to the grace Jesus offers us:

- Our union with Christ and the Trinity is augmented.
- We are given strength to overcome sin. The Eucharist forgives venial sin and preserves us from mortal sin. We are thus given a greater share in the healing, forgiveness, and strength of Jesus.
- We are equipped with every good thing to do God’s will and live His charity in our lives.
- We are united more deeply to our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, the Church.
- We are impelled to feed those who cannot feed themselves, in imitation of the God who feeds us in the Eucharist. The Eucharist, thus, moves us to works of mercy.
- In our lives, we seek to mirror what we contemplate in worship, namely the total self-giving of Jesus in love.
- Transformation: Through the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit is seeking to transform us into what we eat: Jesus. We seek to become the Gift we receive.
- Through this spiritual “food for the journey,” God is leading us step by step to eternal life.

### ***What are the different Eucharistic practices in the Church?***

The Mass is the preeminent celebration of the Eucharist. There are two major feasts which celebrate the Eucharist in a more focused way, however: The *Mass of the Lord's Supper* on Holy Thursday, and the *Solemnity of Corpus Christi*. Since we remember and celebrate many things on Holy Thursday, the Church has a separate feast dedicated in a focused way only to the Eucharist, namely *Corpus Christi*, which means the "Body of Christ" in Latin. All the readings and prayers focus on the Eucharist. There is also a beautiful custom to have a Eucharistic Procession after the Mass, which can happen occasionally at other special times of the year as well. In the United States, we celebrate Corpus Christi two weeks after Pentecost.

Outside of the Mass, the Eucharist is preserved in a *Tabernacle*. In it, the Eucharist is kept present in every Catholic Church in the world continually except on Good Friday and for most of Holy Saturday. A *Sanctuary Lamp* (candle) continually burns near the Tabernacle to indicate that the presence of Jesus is there. The Eucharist is kept in the Tabernacle (1) to bring Holy Communion to the Sick, (2) so that we can have the comfort of the Presence of Jesus in our churches, and (3) so that at regular times we can expose a Host upon the Altar in a decorated display stand called a *Monstrance* for an extended period of prayer to Jesus in the Eucharist, which practice we call "Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament." At the beginning of this time, often an hour, the "Blessed Sacrament" is exposed. For this reason, we also call Adoration "Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament." At the end, usually a blessing with the Eucharist is given. We call this "Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament." The priest covers his arms and hands with a "humeral" (shoulder) veil, in order to highlight that Jesus is directly blessing you in the Eucharist, versus Jesus blessing you more instrumentally through the priest. The practice of genuflection in church can be explained by your RCIA leaders. It is a great practice, as well, to attend the times of Adoration that are offered in your church, and also to pay a "visit" to the Blessed Sacrament present in the Tabernacle in our churches. It is also a beautiful practice for Catholics to make the *Sign of the Cross* whenever walking or driving past a Catholic Church, acknowledging the presence of Jesus therein.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- 1. How do we know that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist?***
- 2. What are the essential elements that the Church teaches about the Eucharist?***
- 3. How is the Eucharist related to our daily lives?***